

## **AU hosts Appalachian Trail speed record-holder Jennifer Pharr Davis**

4/13/12

Endurance athlete, author, and Appalachian Trail speed record holder Jennifer Pharr Davis will be a Women of Influence speaker at Alfred University on Thursday, April 19 at 5:30 p.m. in Nevins Theater, Powell Campus Center. The program, sponsored by the AU Women's Leadership Center, is open to the public free of charge. Davis has hiked more than 11,000 miles on six different continents and is the overall record holder on the Appalachian Trail. At Alfred University, she will share stories from her three completed thru-hikes on the Appalachian Trail, including stories from her first hike in 2005, when she was a naive, inexperienced backpacker traveling the path by herself. She had to overcome danger, tragedy, fears, and doubts to make it from Georgia to Maine, but when she completed the hike she says she was a different person. Attendees will learn how that experience made it possible for Davis to return to the trail in 2008 and set the women's record with the help of her husband Brew. They will hear how Davis and Brew worked together to accomplish what many people thought was impossible for a female hiker - making the overall record by hiking the trail in 46.5 days (an average of 46.9 miles per day). Davis published a memoir of her first hike titled, "Odyssa," in December 2011. She will sign copies of her book at the Alfred University program. During her hike, Davis wrote daily journal entries about her encounters and took photographs of captivating moments. "Odyssa" explores themes on self-discovery, self-image, nature, and faith. On Friday, April 20, students, faculty, staff, and community members are invited to join Davis and Mark McFadden, director of the AU Career Development Center and coordinator of Friday Night Hikes, 6 p.m. near the mailroom on the ground floor of Powell Campus Center, to take a hike in the local area. "Hiking is not only something I enjoy, it's my passion, my career, and my calling," said Davis, who grew up in North Carolina and was exposed to the outdoors at a young age. At age 21, she graduated from Samford University, Birmingham, Ala. and hiked the Appalachian Trail hoping to spend quality time considering what to pursue in life. Davis holds endurance records for three, long-distance trails and National Geographic named her the 2012 Adventurer of the Year. She has hiked the Pacific Crest Trail, Vermont's Long Trail, and the Colorado Trail. Davis has traveled and hiked six continents including Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in South America, and the 600-mile Bibbulmun Track in Australia. Despite harsh conditions, cuts and bruises, Davis says she enjoys every moment she spends hiking. "I love the trails because every day I see new things and meet new people. The sunset, wildlife and seeing my husband at the next roadside motivates me," said Davis. Davis is a frequent contributor to the Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine and has written articles for Trail Runner Magazine and continues to free-lance. Davis and her husband, Brew, are the current founder and owner of Blue Ridge Hiking Company in Asheville, NC, where they currently reside. The hiking company offers guided hikes and workshops.