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Jul 15, 2009 8:52 pm US/Eastern

'Hugging Saint' Greets Large Crowds in Marlboro



Reporting
[Bill Shields](#)

MARLBORO (WBZ) — Hundreds, maybe thousands waited for hours Wednesday at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel & Trade Center in Marlboro to feel the embrace of the woman known as Amma.

"She inspires people to volunteer on behalf of the poor," says volunteer Rob Sidon. "She says compassion to the poor is our duty to god."

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi was born to a lower caste fishing family in India.

As a teenager, Amma began hugging people.

Soon, word of her spirituality spread and now she spends her days touring the world, hugging people. Her money, millions of dollars, is spent on helping the poor.

She is not a fortune teller or spiritual healer, but Lauren Kinkaid gave birth to twins and credits Amma.

"For a year and a half, we had many pregnancy losses and I came here last year, got to speak with Amma, prayed for more children and three weeks later I got pregnant," says Lauren.

This is no publicity stunt. Amma has been doing this around the world for 29 years without so much as one day off.

"It's love, it's pure love," says one follower.

She has addressed the United Nations, but prefers the intimacy of an embrace..

On any given day, she'll hug 5-to-10,000 people.

"It's far more spiritual, it's far more encompassing, it's far more full than I ever felt in my whole life," says another follower.

Some are from the fringes of society, others from right in the middle, but all with a spiritual bond to a woman who preaches no particular religion... except love.

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Indian spiritual leader Mata Amritanandamayi, or Amma is referred to as a saint by her followers and is a widely respected humanitarian.
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