

'Hugging saint' returns to York

Big crowds expected for award-winning humanitarian

Need a hug? Mata Amritanandamayi, better known as Amma or the hugging saint, is scheduled for two appearances in York Region this month.

Born into a Hindu family in Southern India in 1953, Amma has gained a reputation for humanitarian work that includes building homes for the poor, orphanages, clinics and a 1,300-bed Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences hospital in India.

And yes, she hugs people. Her last three-day appearance in York Region in the summer of 2005 drew huge crowds, with some coming from as far as New York State to get a hug.

On tour, she is known to sit in a hall until she has hugged everyone attending.

According to her website, many have described her embrace as divine.

Those who meet her during her York Region appearances can also ask a question or seek guidance.

In 2002, Amma received the Gandhi-King Award for Non-Violence at the United Nations in Geneva, an award previously given to Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela.



AMMA: Her 2005 appearance brought visitors from as far away as New York State.

She spoke at the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona and in 2000 addressed the UN at the Millennium World Peace Summit.

Amma appears July 23 at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. at the Renaissance Parque Convention Centre at 2800 Hwy. 7 W. in Concord. She also appears July 26 at 7 p.m. at the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North at Hwy. 7 and Leslie Street.

Both sessions are free of charge. Amma is also holding a retreat from July 24 to 26. For more information or to register, call 905-824-2229 or e-mail info@ammaCanada.ca

For schedules and information, visit www.amma.org or www.ammaCanada.ca

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