

'Hugging Saint' headed to M.A. Center in LaFox

Published: Tuesday, June 17, 2014 9:47 p.m. CDT

LAFOX – Spiritual leader Mata Amritanadamayui, also known as India's "Hugging Saint" will head to the M.A. Center Chicago in LaFox during her North American Tour.

Thousands are expected at the [center](#) at 41W501 Keslinger Road, near Elburn, said Suresh Babu, a volunteer spokesman for Amma, as she is known.

Free public programs will be at 11 a.m. June 23, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. June 24 and 10 a.m. June 25.

Babu said those who wish to get a hug should come 90 minutes early and get a numbered token.

"If they manage to get there by 8 or 9 a.m., they tend to get their hug in about two hours," Babu said.

More than 6,000 people came last year for hugs, but because the free public programs are offered during workdays this year, Babu said he expects about 5,000.

Amma has been giving blessings in the form of hugs since 1987 and has hugged 24 million people over the years, he said.

"Some say, 'I don't know what took over me,' 'I am so at peace with myself,' are things I have personally heard," Babu said. "Her hugs are manifesting universal love. It is done in a subdued environment, which is more spiritual in nature and will have a religious overtone to it based on the Hindu philosophy of universal love."

However, Amma herself does not claim to be a Hindu or belong to any religion, Babu said.

"She is hugged by all faiths. Rabbis. Cardinals and bishops," Babu said. "Buddhist monks, priests from all denominations – they all go up and get a hug."