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Uhuru Ascent Climber Biographies

Darol Kubacz

Founder, Freedom For Life, Organizer of the Uhuru Ascent

Darol Kubacz lost the use of his legs while in the U.S. army in 1992. After nine years of pushing the limits of his ability, he broke his neck while freestyle ski-jumping and spent the following 16 weeks in a halo. After being a paraplegic for 12 years, Kubacz founded Freedom For Life as an organization that introduces people to outdoor sports and wilderness adventures and redefines the way they approach life. A native of South Carolina, Kubacz uses customized adaptive mountaineering equipment when training in Flagstaff and Phoenix. While living in the Colorado Rockies, Kubacz worked for the U.S. Forest Service and was involved in developing mountaineering equipment and wilderness trail access projects.

Pisey Tan

Climber, Uhuru Ascent

A native of Philadelphia, Pa., Army Specialist Pisey Tan is a double-amputee veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was injured only nine months ago by an improved explosive device while serving as a mechanized infantryman. Uhuru Ascent will mark the first mountain he has climbed in his life. Prior to his injury, he enjoyed playing basketball and football. Currently rehabilitating at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., Specialist Tan uses football drills and weight training to strengthen his legs and upper body.

Kevin Cherilla

Expedition Leader, Freedom For Life

Kevin Cherilla grew up in Pittsburgh, Pa. and moved to Phoenix, Arizona fourteen years ago when he began rock climbing with the Arizona Mountaineering Club. He has been mountaineering for almost two decades and his adventures have taken him to six continents and more than 20 countries. Since 1993, he has traveled the world with world-class blind adventurer, Erik Weiheymayer. He enjoys rock and ice climbing, running marathons, biking and mountaineering. He served as the base camp manager for the NFB 2001 Everest Expedition, during which Weiheymayer became the first blind person to summit Mt. Everest and the team broke five world records. For the past three years, he has led successful expeditions up Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa, where he stood on top with a 13 and 67-year-old and is extremely proud that most of his clients are his middle and high school students and their families. In his spare time, Kevin enjoys spending time with his wife, Jennifer, and two children, Adam and Lindsey. He earned his bachelor's degree in exercise physiology from John Carroll University (Cleveland, Ohio) in 1991. He has been an elementary and junior high physical education teacher for the past fourteen years. Kevin currently teaches physical education at Phoenix Country Day School and coaches boy's basketball and baseball.

Nate Hansen

Climber, Uhuru Ascent

An accomplished journalist, Nate Hansen is one of the disabled veterans joining organizer Darol Kubacz on the Uhuru Ascent. He was an Arabic linguist and a combat-flight medic for the U.S. Army. He suffers from bi-polar schizo-affective disorder. Hansen spends his time as a father, poet, artist and writer, hoping every role he plays will not be interfered with by his illness. He views Mount Kilimanjaro as not just a mountain, but also a symbolic climax to a journey towards complete freedom, and he climbs for those who cannot. Hansen has written articles for the *Red Rock News* in Sedona, Arizona and multiple Arizona publications.

John Bell

Climber, Uhuru Ascent

A native of Liberia, John Bell is a walking quadriplegic who lives in Arizona. When he was young, he broke his neck from a fall that paralyzed him. Through perseverance and the assistance of others, he is now able to enjoy hiking. An avid soccer fan, John has also lived in France and Sierra Leone. In 2003, he came to the United States as a refugee from the war in Liberia, where a majority of his family was killed.

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