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The Uhuru Ascent ***An Extraordinary Expedition By Disabled Veterans***

In August 2006 a group of disabled veterans plan to make the ultimate trip, and take on the greatest challenge of their lives, when they climb Mt. Kilimanjaro on an expedition called the Uhuru Ascent. These dedicated veterans, who have already tackled the arduous obstacle of living daily with a disability, are raising funds so that they can embark on this monumental and historic endeavor.

The Uhuru Ascent was conceived by Darol Kubacz, who founded an organization called Freedom For Life to help disabled outdoor enthusiasts, and it represents an important and lofty goal in the lives of the veterans and friends who are training to make the ascent on one of the highest freestanding mountains in the world at 19,341 feet. Darol aims to be the first paraplegic veteran to summit the mountain unassisted.

The Uhuru Ascent mission is to redefine the perception of what it means to be a disabled veteran and how to better experience physical fitness and outdoor activities. He has set these objectives with personal determination and sacrifice, and he seeks to demonstrate the strength that can come from apparent weaknesses.

Kubacz will be accompanied by climbing partner Pisey Tan, a double-amputee Army specialist and recent veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, who will experience one of the greatest rehabilitation assignments ever. Tan recently left Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and was assigned an army medic to help him train for the Uhuru Ascent with Kubacz in Arizona.

Mt. Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa, located in Northeast Tanzania, near the Kenya border. The success rate for climbers without any physical limitations is often low. The conditions and technical aspects of the climb result in unpredictable situations that can impede a climber's progress. Other disabled climbers with wheelchairs have attempted the climb and reached the summit with help. The community of disabled veterans and climbers is waiting to see who will be the first to accomplish this rare feat. Summit Mt. Kilimanjaro is viewed as the "Mt. Everest" for disabled climbers for it presents more feasible access.

Since he is paralyzed from the chest down, Darol will climb the mountain using a hand-driven mountain climber for 16,000 feet. Afterwards, he will transition into a customized adaptive, multi-wheeled ascending device called the "Slider" that incorporates conventional rock climbing gear, ropes, winches and anchoring devices. This unique apparatus is designed to allow Darol to reach the unprecedented final 3,000 feet. At no point during the ascent, will he be carried or pushed.

In the course of preparing and completing this expedition, the climbers will conquer any fears of failure, embarrassment and pain to change the way disabled people are viewed and how they see themselves as active outdoorsmen. Their monumental expedition will be chronicled in their own words and thoughts via blogs and journals. A documentary film crew will accompany them to produce an all-access portrait of the climb. The documentary will share the story and purpose of the Uhuru Ascent for years to come. Freedom For Life will showcase the film at hospitals, corporations and community organizations to spread its mission, empower people, alter people's perceptions and challenge them to do try new activities and support those who embark on new endeavors to overcome limitations.

For further information on the Uhuru Ascent and how to contribute, please visit www.uhuruascent.com.

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