



Mount Kilimanjaro climb tests endurance of persons with disabilities

Cerebral palsy fails to deter climber's determination

Climbing Africa's highest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, would challenge even the fittest individuals. For a person whose every step on uneven ground is difficult, the challenge of an eight-day hike over rugged terrain might seem insurmountable. Thirteen stacked Empire State buildings would fall short of being as tall as Mount Kilimanjaro's highest peak.

Undaunted by challenges, Canadian Matthew Brewer, 32, whose cerebral palsy manifests itself in his legs, pledged with Wayne Tom, 41, to conquer the mountain. Both receive services at Prince George Association for Community Living (AiMHi) in Prince George, British Columbia. The two teamed with AiMHi program managers Marc Lawrence, 30, and Heather Groleau, 22, to scale the mountain.

The journey to Mount Kilimanjaro, in northeast Tanzania near the Kenya border, was sponsored by the British Columbia Association for Community Living to raise awareness about the capabilities of persons with disabilities. The journey brought together 45 persons who receive services and their supporters from 16 of the province's community living programs.

"The team demonstrated how much can be accomplished by sharing the same goals and desires," Lawrence said. "Collectively, we believed we could and would climb the mountain."

Team members hiked through several terrains and climate zones—forest, moorland, high desert, and glaciers. Of the persons embarking

Brought to you by the ECS
Customer Service Unit at

The logo for CARF (Canadian Association for Rehabilitation) features the lowercase letters 'carf' in a bold, sans-serif font. A horizontal line extends from the top of the 'f' to the right, ending in a short vertical bar.

Volume 3, Issue 1
April 2008

News From CARF

New sets of CARF standards focuses on consumer-focused and consumer-run services

New standards for Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach complement recently revised CARF standards for Employment Transition Services.

Standards for Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach are written to support persons with disabilities with individual and family benefits planning. Trained and professional benefits planning specialists provide service consultation and guidance in choosing how and when to access needed economic resources and to

on the journey, 40, including one person using a wheelchair, reached Stella Point, 19,012 feet above sea level. Thirty team members pressed on to reach Kilimanjaro's highest point, Uhuru Peak, 19,340 feet above sea level.

Brewer walked every step of the climb, including the ascent to Uhuru Peak. "Coming down was the hardest," he said. "It was rocky at the top but grew easier nearer the bottom."

"The journey was a test of determination," Lawrence added. "The climbers individually pushed their personal endurance levels to unimaginable heights, sometimes hiking ten to twelve hours a day over rugged terrain. We faced heat, exhaustion, bitter cold, challenging ridges, and altitudes with only half as much oxygen as our bodies were accustomed to. Altitude sickness became our greatest challenge.



"It took lots of mutual support to keep our spirits up. Often, it would be the person I was there to support who gave me the strength to go on."

In addition to challenges, the climb brought unexpected moments of delight. "When I came into camp on the third day, 220 porters and guides gathered around me and sang in Swahili," Brewer said. "It was awesome."

Lawrence and Brewer recounted the challenges of their mountaineering experience at the CARF's Employment and Community Services "Aspire to Innovation and Excellence" International Conference in Tucson in March.

Lawrence is AiMHi's human resources coordinator at present. Aided by AiMHi's work option and community support team, Brewer lives on his own and has started a business with a friend shoveling snow in the winter and mowing grass in the summer. He included the climb in his person-centered plan and says he was proud to check it off his list of things to accomplish.

For more information please contact Reneé Bibby at rbibby@carf.org or (888) 281-6531.

advocate for benefits.

Employment Transition Services helps achieve successful post-school activities. CARF's Transition from School to Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency standards seek to strengthen the collaboration between schools and service agencies. These services might be either based in schools, in service agencies, or both. These standards, while not new, were revised based on input from the field.

For information about the new and revised standards and CARF accreditation, please contact CARF's Employment and Community Services customer service unit toll free at 888-281-6531 (voice/TTY) or ecs@carf.org

Promising Practices issues now archived online!

Do you remember a past article coming out that you'd like to forward on to a colleague? Did you just join Promising Practices and want to see issues we covered in the past? Well, now you can! Old issues of Promising Practices are now available online. Visit archived issues at www.carf.org/newsletter and follow links to past issues. Past issues are categorized by topic so you can easily find articles of interest.

