

District 7680 Rotarians to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro to help End Polio Now

30 Charlotteans are preparing to climb the highest mountain in Africa- Mt. Kilimanjaro. The climb next month will help end Polio. In addition to rigorous training they have also raised nearly \$100,000 towards the cause.

"Mt Kilimanjaro is the hardest mental and physical challenge you will ever do in your life," says Macon Dunnagan who will be leading the crew. "Honestly, I thought we would only get 3 or 4 people but to have 30 come out from the Charlotte area Rotary 7680 to do this and to raise money for End Polio Now, it's just incredible."

Chris Jones is the District Governor for Rotary 7680, he says Polio is a plane ride away from being a serious problem for us at home, "Polio can come back to our country. We had an outbreak in 2006 and China had an outbreak last year." It's this concern that's inspiring the climb.

Dunnagan says the trick is to walk slowly. Those who walk fast generally don't make it to the top. "I think the altitude is the main thing. Most of these folks never been above 12,000 feet. Their first day we get to 10,000 feet."

Climber Debbie Corbett is bracing herself for the climb, "I can remember being in college and skiing and getting some altitude sickness so I'm a little nervous."

It's 19,388 feet to the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro. The climate changes is what makes this hike so difficult. Imagine traveling from the equator to the North Pole in four days. This is what the climbers will endure.

Debbie has already lost 30 lbs in training. She says she's scared of critters and has never slept in a tent but she's excited to reach the top. "If you would have asked me a year ago I would have never seen this on my radar and i would tell you there's no way I'm doing that."

The expedition starts September 10th. Once the climbers reach the top rotary members will celebrate the summit closer to home - at Crowder's Mountain State Park September 15th.