

# 'No one climbs alone'

*Shakespeare resident climbs to the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro for charity*

Living your dreams is a phrase used by many in the financial sector these days. But for Jeff Workman, a financial planner with IPC Woodstock, fulfilling the dream was something he felt he had to do. In September of 2008 he set out on a 12-day journey to Africa where he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with two friends and raised funds for a worthy cause.

At 29 years of age, Jeff lives in Shakespeare with his wife Connie (Strauss) and their two children - Paige 4, and Abigail, 2. At that time, a son, Nathan, now 1 month old, was on the way. Addressing his sense of adventure and facing the challenge of not only being away from his family, but climbing the tallest free-standing mountain in the world, he stepped forward to combine his dream with assistance to others less fortunate.

After graduating from Fanshawe College in London, Jeff joined the Woodstock chapter of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. He wanted to be a positive role model to young people who weren't as fortunate to grow up in a nurturing family such as his. He realized there was not only a huge need, but a huge benefit.

So, for the climb, he set a goal of raising \$19,430; one dollar for each foot of the mountain's height. Now, less than \$1,000 away from his goal, he goes out to talk with clubs and organizations about his dream fulfilled in hopes of making things a little better for the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization. He spoke to the Tavistock Men's Club last Thursday evening, April 16.

"No one climbs the mountain alone," is Jeff's narrative, talking about his accomplishment as well as the daily challenges faced by the youth in our communities. The money raised "has a direct impact on the youth in our community," he says. "Your contribution will change the lives of young boys and girls, giving them access to a variety of Mentoring Programs. Big Brothers Big



Jeff Workman (right) and Andre Kaniuk stand at the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa with a banner "Climb for Kids Sake" after a 5-day ascent to raise money for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Woodstock.

Sisters give children a gift that lasts a lifetime: a friend. It is amazing what a little friendship can do. Friendships can be so simple, and yet make a world of difference in a young person's life."

Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro is no easy feat. The project took seven months of planning, six months of training, and five days of climbing through four distinct climate and vegetative zones. When his plan was developing, Jeff knew it would be cheaper to climb as a group, so he was joined by Peter Laing, a local chartered accountant, and Andre Kaniuk, a college acquaintance. They left on September 9, 2008

from Detroit, U.S. and flew to Amsterdam, Holland, then directly to Kilimanjaro International Airport.

The three Canadian climbers required one guide and three porters each for the five-day ascent. "They worked very hard for their money," Jeff said, earning \$50 for the week of work plus a \$50 required tip. Their packs included food, several layers of clothing, tents and cooking gear.

There are at least seven routes to reach the summit at Uhuru Peak and Jeff and his group took the trail from Machame Gate which starts at 1,500m. The first day they climbed another 1,500 metres into the National Park to Machame Hut. It was 18 degrees and the group wore pants and t-shirts and experienced the only rainfall of the trip, donning waterproof jackets on the way up. The first leg of the climb was through rainforest and was quite comfortable, Jeff said. At that elevation, they took a water break every 15 minutes, drinking 4-5 litres per day. They hiked from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and were in bed by 8 p.m.

Day two began with a steep walk through heather which led onto a hilly ridge with many false plateaus. Vegetation thinned dramatically and was nearly all gone halfway through the day. At 3,847m they took a side excursion to Shira Caves and saw the "Window in the Rock." That night they slept at Shira Camp with about 100 other climbers. From here you could see the peak and Jeff awoke early to get a photograph of the sun rising over it.

Day three began like most other days, but it was a long day, important for acclimatization. It

was a 10 km hike over 8 hours, gaining only 138m in height during the day. The idea is to "climb high, sleep low." Lava tower is located 4642m, often the point where altitude sickness is first felt caused by the body's inability to adapt quickly to the higher altitude. "Air pressure drops 1/10th for every 1000m of altitude. The air pressure at the top of Kilimanjaro is 40 per cent of what is found at the base, therefore, it is much harder to fill your lungs with every breath, as there is not as much pressure to push air into them, Jeff said. "On the top, you

take in about half of the air you do at the base," he added. The guides kept telling them, "pole, pole" which means go slow. They climbed to the tower, then descended and hiked horizontally to Barafu Hut for a good night's sleep at the lower altitude.

Day four from Barranco Camp at 3,985m began with a 300m near vertical climb of Barranco Wall which took about 1.5 hours to climb. It was physically challenging and a tad risky; "but don't tell my mom," Jeff said quietly. It was worth every effort for the view although there was "nothing but rock and wind," Jeff said. The end of this day had them camping on boulders in a sheltered spot above Karangu Hut. It was like the look of Mars; not very comfortable at all. To assist with cop-

ing, Jeff took Diamox, a medication for altitude sickness that increases heart rate and lung speed while sleeping, increasing air flow into lungs and oxygen into the blood. The one problem was that along with sleeping with a large rock at his back, he couldn't sleep much at all because of the affects of the pills.

The next morning the porters stayed behind and Peter admitted he was unable to continue the climb. Jeff and Andre and their two guides woke at midnight to make an attempt at the summit by daybreak. It started to get much colder and the wind picked up considerably. They donned lots of layers of clothes, all that they had brought including two pair of socks, two hats, two pair of pants and snow pants, shirts, coats, and mitts. It was a zig-zag trail full of loose "scree" which had the climbers taking two steps forward and one step back. They reached Stella Point after 6 hours of climbing to see the sun rise over the clouds in bursts of colour.

This was anti-climactic as they still hadn't reached the point where the famous sign stands congratulating climbers on their achievement. They hiked another 45 minutes to Uhuru Peak where they unveiled the Big Brothers and Big Sisters' banner which read, "Climb for Kids Sake." It was a 20-minute celebration at the top, taking photographs, video, and taking in a 360 degree view of the African continent.

"You don't feel like you want to stay there," Jeff admitted. In only a day and a half, they descended the mountain that had taken them 5 days to climb. "Your body just craved that oxygen," Jeff said, so the descent was quick, yet very physically demanding as well.

The trip itself cost about \$5,000 and was paid for by Jeff. All the money raised however goes directly to Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Jeff's portion included airfare and accommodation as well as hiking and camping equipment, guide and porter fees, as well as two safaris while in Africa, one at Lake Manyara and the other at the Ngorongoro Crater.

"I could not have made it to the top without you," Jeff states in his acknowledgement to Big Brothers and Big Sisters. "Your moral support and encouragement helped push me to the summit."

People can visit the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Woodstock web site at [www.bbb-woodstock.ca](http://www.bbb-woodstock.ca) and under sponsorship, click on Climb for Kids to make a donation. You can also call Jeff directly at 519-539-2076 to make a donation or arrange for him to speak to your group or organization.



From the left, Andre Kaniuk, Jeff Workman, and Peter Laing stand at the Machame Gate prior to their ascent of Mt. Kilimanjaro in September 2008.



Jeff Workman, Shakespeare