

Making It To The Top In Fundraising

by Valerie McLaughlin (West Carleton Review Weekender and Arnprior Chronicle-Guide, December 15, 2006)

Gisele Lalonde Mansfield has tackled one major hurdle in her upcoming climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro for the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign – reaching her fundraising goal of \$19,335.60.

The Dunrobin woman raised the money, which represents the height of the Tanzanian mountain, within 100 days of launching her fundraising campaign earlier this year. A recent \$2,500 donation from a generous donor greatly assisted her in reaching her goal.

“He put me over the top, which is superb. I am very pleased,” Lalonde Mansfield remarked.

“Everyone I talked to said I’d go way over my goal. I wasn’t sure. It is amazing. I’m totally thrilled and sublimely happy.

Every penny she has raised will go to Stephen Lewis Foundation’s Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign, a campaign that helps to care and support African grandmothers raising their grandchildren who have been orphaned by AIDS. The campaign is a part of Stephen Lewis’ foundation. Lewis is the secretary general’s special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Lalonde Mansfield has wanted to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro after reading Michael Crichton’s *Travels* several years ago. At the urging of her husband, Michael Mansfield, she has decided to pursue that dream.

However, when she made the decision, she came to the conclusion she needed a motivator to get her to Africa and onto the mountain summit. That’s when she decided to dedicate her climb to the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign. She knows the devastation of HIV/AIDS can have on a family. Her brother, Michel Lalonde, died of the disease 11 years ago.

She has attracted others to her cause. Liza Badham, a grandmother and a great grandmother from Fitzroy Harbour, will accompany Lalonde Mansfield on her journey up the mountain summit.

“Now the challenge is to get her to the top. We have effectively doubled the goal,” Lalonde Mansfield said.

All the money raised will go to the campaign. Both women will cover all the costs associated with the trip to Africa, which will take place in October 2007.

“I can’t imagine how much good this money will do for the grandmothers. It gives me goose bumps just thinking what they can buy and that it will relieve the pain they are facing,” she said.

“They still need our help. They still have the same problem when I first started this a couple of months ago. In a couple of years hopefully we can say this was a thing of the past and (grandmothers) can live their lives as grandmothers, not sole income earners.”

Although she is continuing with her regular exercise routine, Lalonde Mansfield will step up her training in the spring. She is also continuing with her fundraising and public awareness campaign. She intends to organize a public barbecue next year and a trail hike and run event next fall.

For more information about Gisele Lalonde Mansfield and her journey, visit www.gigiclimbskili.com.

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