News

At Longyearbyen City Center with statue of Longyear

Checking out their tents and gear

Walking into town (Longyearbyen)

Hamiltonians head to North Pole to raise money and awareness

By Sandy Bunyan
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The basement is also a great place for an office if you prefer a quiet setting away from the hustle and bustle of life.With a wholehearted commitment to local children's charities, five local business men, three of whom are prominent in our local new-home building community, will be joining two other adventurers and skiing to the North Pole in hopes of raising $500,000 for local children's charities.

Peter Turkstra, President of Turkstra Lumber, Steve Stipsits, President of Branthaven Homes, Fred Losani, President of Losani Homes, Paul Hubner, President of Baffin Technology, and Scott Shawyer, President of JMP Engineering, make up the local portion of the 'To the Top of the World Charity' expedition that is scheduled for April 7-22, 2006. The team, lead by renowned world explorer and adventurer, Doug Stoup, will be flown to the floating Borneo Ice Station at 89 degrees north, skiing approximately 115 km, the distance of the last degree to the geographic North Pole.

A far cry from a warm and cozy telethon, our local business men will be skiing across ice and snow, approximately seven hours a day in frigid conditions (-30 to -50 degrees Celsius), while pulling all of their provisions for their trek (food, fuel, equipment and tents), an extra 100 pounds each, in large sledges that will be harnessed to their bodies. Team members have been preparing themselves by getting fit for their expedition. "I was skiing heavily earlier in December, but now am doing dry land training, predominately cardio - running on the treadmill," explains Peter Turkstra. He has also been pulling tires attached to his body in order to condition himself for when he will be pulling a sledge. The entire skiing journey is expected to take at least seven days.

"Each night we will set up camp right on the ice," explains Doug Stoup. "We will have three tents, and three stoves. We'll prepare our meals using specially-designed high-calorie freeze dried food packages and melted snow." The simple act of boiling water (from snow) is not an easy feat in the Arctic. "We will spend almost as much time boiling water as we will skiing - two and a half hours each morning and evening."

Fully committed to raising as much money as possible, 100 per cent of the expenses are being paid for by the participants. "This ensures that every single dollar raised goes directly to the fund," explains Steve Stipsits. The money raised is just one component of how children can benefit from this expedition. Stoup has been making dramatic slide and video presentations at several schools in the area (Hess Street School Public School, Cathedral Secondary Catholic School, and Dundas Central Public School). His focus is to teach and inspire children about ecology, the environment and science, as well as other areas in their life. His fun and relaxed

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presentations are eye-opening to say the least and show just what can be done when you are determined and prepared. "You can do anything you want to do, so long as are committed to work hard and do what it takes to make it happen," said Stoup at his presentation at Cathedral High School. To round out the experience, our team will send back daily dispatches via satellite, allowing students to ask questions over the Internet. An HDTV documentary of the expedition will be filmed for DVD release, along with live coverage (audio and video dispatches on ICE AXE TV). Children (and adults) are encouraged to communicate with the team and follow them by visiting their interactive Web site at www.iceaxe.tv/interactive.shtml.

All of the funds raised will directly support the following programs in the Hamilton, Niagara, and Halton Regions: Food programs to provide nourishment in city schools, Music Programs for kids, and investment in our area public schools and other local charities - all aimed at providing resources to children and families that need assistance. At the time of writing, $150,000 has been raised.

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