

One mountain at a time

Wally Glover is scaling peaks to raise funds for the fight against childhood obesity, now considered a health crisis in America.



Wally Glover is climbing mountains to fight childhood obesity. He's in Australia now, preparing to tackle its highest peak.

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He didn't begin mountain climbing until he was 50, but Wally Glover has developed a passion for the sport. He's currently in Australia, planning to climb that continent's highest peak, Mt. Kosciuszko. Wally has turned his mountain climbing into a fundraising effort to benefit what's increasingly being described as an epidemic: childhood obesity.

Wally is now on a plane headed for Melbourne. At the end of his 36-hour journey (which is really just the beginning of his adventure), he'll look for lodging. The next day, he'll find a way to make the five-hour drive to Sydney.

Wally is an experienced climber. In 2007, he made it to the Mt. Everest Base Camp and summited Mt. Kilimanjaro in 2009. Last year, he summited Mt. Elbrus. His three previous climbs have all been as part of planned expeditions, led by experienced staff.

This time, Wally is going solo. Mt. Kosciuszko is in a national park and is well-marked. It doesn't require a guide. But Wally has no lodging reservations made and is playing it by ear, dealing with

Childhood Obesity statistics

Here are some childhood obesity facts that may surprise you and, are causing concern among U.S. health experts. These statistics have been compiled from various sources.

- Almost 30% of kids eat some type of fast food every day of the year.
- Children with problems of obesity may suffer from other problems such as depression and social anxiety disorders. This is due to the fact that obese children may feel shy and hesitant to approach others due to their weight issues.
- Nearly 30% of the entire children's population are now obese.
- The instances of childhood obesity in US have risen 3 times in the last 30 years. In the year 1980, just 6.5% of children aged 6-11 were obese.
- One of the interesting childhood obesity statistics in the U.S. is that obesity is not prevalent in the preschool low-income group. Just 1 in 7 low-income preschool kids is obese.
- Nearly 85% of female girls aged 12-19 don't get proper calcium in their diet.
- Almost 25% of obese adults were obese in their childhood.
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) research found the number of children in U.S. meeting the dietary guidelines are very low, only about 40%.

In the US, children spend more time in front of the TV and computers, eating fast foods and snacking, than in sports and games. This has made them vulnerable to obesity.

what each day brings.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle requires a similar sort of stepping out in faith. While you can take classes and benefit from having a leader at the start of your journey, at some point, you must go it alone. You have to learn how to choose healthy foods on your own and cope with the stresses that make filling up on junk food and not exercising easy traps.

Wally has a much bigger purpose than fulfilling his personal sense of adventure and maintaining his own health when he climbs. He's turned his hobby, which he calls 2 Trek 4 Kids, into a fundraising venture benefiting youth obesity, specifically LIFE (Lifetime, Individual, Fitness and Eating) for Kids.

Wally serves as chaplain at St. Vincent Salem Hospital and St. Vincent Dunn at Bedford. He pays for 100 percent of the costs associated with his climbs -- about \$5,000 per trip -- out of his own pocket. He seeks pledges and donations to raise funds for LIFE for Kids. Past climbs have raised a total of \$42,000 to benefit childhood obe-

sity. So far this time, \$11,500 has been raised through St. Vincent Salem and St. Vincent Dunn, including a \$5,000 donation from the hospital's medical staff, for which the hospital is extremely grateful.

Obesity is now considered the fastest-growing public health challenge facing the nation. Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the last 30 years. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 years increased from 6.5% in 1980 to 19.6% in 2008. The prevalence of obesity among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years increased from 5.0% to 18.1%.

Indiana is among the fattest states, with 24 percent of Indiana's population considered obese, tying the Hoosier state with Michigan, Kentucky and Texas. Only two states have higher rates: Mississippi at 26 percent, and West Virginia, 25 percent.

Around 70 percent of the children suffering from obesity already exhibit at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Joint problems, cancers, bone problems as well as poor self esteem and many other

How to help

If you would like donate to LIFE for Kids, send a check to St. Vincent Salem Hospital, Trek 4 Kids, 911 N. Shelby St., Salem, Ind. 47167. Contributions are tax deductible.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

social and psychological problems plague obese youth.

Sadly, obesity is now the second leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S.

Wally has tackled three of the Seven Summits; Kosciuszko will be his fourth. The Seven Summits are the highest mountains on each of the seven continents. Wally didn't summit Everest, but he did climb 17,600 feet to the base camp (the mountain peak stands at 29,035 feet). Upon return from that trip, he said he was finished. The climb had some painful and difficult physical side effects and Wally didn't want any further part of that.

Weight loss and choosing to eat healthy may be difficult and somewhat painful at first. Our bodies are wired to react with pleasure to fats and sweets; everyone is familiar with that satisfying rush accompanying a bite of chocolate. One may resolve to change his eating habits and go a distance in accomplishing that goal, then be tempted to give up, to abandon

Follow Wally's journey

Wally plans to blog about his trek on his website, 2trek4kids.org. A link is provided through this story posted at www.salemleader.com

hope because it is hard.

Wally began giving a motivational program called Capacity To Dream. As he encouraged others to follow their dreams, he began to reconsider his decision to abandon mountain climbing. It wasn't long before he wanted to tackle another mountain. Then another thought entered his mind: Dare he dream of completing the Seven Summits? The oldest person to do so was 73. Wally turns 63 next month. "Is it reasonable to think I can do that?" he asked during a recent interview. "Absolutely not! But a lot of people are told no." And, he added, many of them go on to prove naysayers completely wrong.

For someone who's overweight, losing a large amount seems as insurmountable as climbing a single mountain, let alone seven. Shows such as NBC's "Biggest Loser" show the joy and

thrill of contestants as they shed the pounds ... and the tears and moments of self-doubt that creep in when they fail to lose, or in some cases, gain weight. The number one lesson of "Biggest Loser" is that it's not about weight loss, it's about adopting a healthy lifestyle and that is a daily decision.

Preparing to climb a mountain is a monumental task -- especially when one lives in the relative flatlands of the Midwest. Training for Kosciuszko, Wally began in September walking an average of 127 miles a month with a 40-pound backpack. Salem's hills have been a benefit as have those found in Bedford. Wally has also trained by climbing a 98-degree tower, learning five times up equals a linear mile. "I've been very vigilant; I haven't missed a day of training."

Wally is thrilled that the Salem and Bedford hospitals are establishing childhood obesity programs. LIFE for Kids includes monitoring through the Salem Pediatrics office, counseling with dietitian Jackie Kramer and Nurse Practitioner Sherylyn Schmidt. Wally also hopes it will grow to include presentations he'd like to make at area schools and to other groups, speaking about his moun-

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tain-climbing experiences and how others can achieve the dream of a healthy lifestyle.

"If they see this gray-haired old man who climbs mountains, maybe they'll realize, 'By golly, I can take better care of myself,'" he said.

It's human nature to live in denial. We all think we're invincible, that somehow we'll be spared the negative consequences of our unhealthy choices. Life doesn't work that way, and Wally's seen that firsthand. "I've been in the ER when a young man died because of health problems brought on by his weight. I don't ever want to do that again," he said.

If something doesn't change in Washington County, Indiana and the nation as a whole, Wally knows, however, he will be involved as more people succumb to obesity-related diseases. He may not be able to move mountains, but he's willing to climb them to help prevent that.