

Climber on way to top of the world

• DANVILLE: Employer helps pay way for resident to scale Mount Everest

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Most employers encourage their workers to climb the corporate ladder. Danville resident Curt Myers' employer is helping him climb mountains.

Myers, 27, is now on the slopes of Mount Everest in Nepal. The avid climber is expected to make it to the top of the Himalayan peak on Saturday, weather permitting.

And his employer, SimplexGrinnell, is offering financial support to Myers as he fulfills his dream of climbing the world's highest peak.

Chris Woodcock, a spokesman for the fire safety, communications and security design company, declined to state how much the company has contributed to help Myers' climb, but the funds helped pay for the climb as well as purchase special equipment for the journey.

Myers is largely taking vacation time for this adventure. He left for Nepal in late March and if all goes according to plan, he is expected to return to the Bay Area in June.

Myers, a pipe fitter and foreman in the Florida-based company's San Francisco office, is getting support because Myers' goals are in line with the company's core values.

"As a leader in the industry, we want employees who stand out and who strive for excellence," Woodcock said. "Curt is a testament to those high standards."

Myers' progress is on the minds of all the company's 11,500 employees across the country. They are being updated on his quest through internal e-mails, and a Myspace.com account has been set up with more information.

Myers' father, Chris Myers of Danville, said his second-born has been a climber since he was 18 months old.

"He would climb anything in the backyard," Chris Myers said. Then Curt joined the Boy Scouts and discovered his love of hiking and climbing. "One thing led to another," Chris Myers said, and in 2002, he began climbing mountains.

Curt Myers began working for SimplexGrinnell after graduating from San Ramon Valley High School in 1997 and has been there since, except for a year when he took off to study to be a paramedic, his father said. He is also a volunteer firefighter for the Alameda County Fire Department.

"When he decides he's going to do something, he's going to do that," Chris Myers said.

Having his son's employer help him out is a "godsend", his dad said. Curt Myers footed the bill himself on all his other major climbs.

"It's not something you do on the weekend," Chris Myers said. "You have to have a real good relationship with your employer to take off a month."

Myers has conquered the highest peaks on four continents: Mount McKinley in North America, Mount Aconcagua in South America, Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, and Mount Elbrus in Europe. Everest would cross the largest peak in Asia off his list.

Reaching the summit of the highest peaks of all seven continents is considered a major feat among mountain climbers. If he makes it up Mount Everest, Myers will have Antarctica's Vinson Massif and Carstensz Pyramid near Australia left to conquer.

Although their son is athletic and has returned from his other climbs, Curt Myers' parents can't help but be a little concerned about the latest peak. "There is no air at the top of Mount Everest," said Chris Myers.

He and his son talk periodically by satellite phone and when he can, Curt e-mails.

The family is supportive and is very proud of the climb, and Myers doesn't forget that. Every time he makes it to the top of a peak, he brings along a family portrait.

"We've all been at the top of these mountains," Chris Myers said.

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Curt Myers' climb

For more about Curt Myers' climb, visit:

<http://myspace.com/reachingnewheights>

Mount Everest facts

- Mount Everest is 29,035 feet high.
- Temperatures can drop to -76 degrees and winds can reach speeds of more than 100 miles per hour.
- It was named in 1865 after Sir George Everest, the British surveyor-general of India. In Nepal, where the mountain is located, it is called Sagarmatha, which means "goddess of the sky."
- The first people to ascend the mountain were Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay of Nepal on May 29, 1953.
- The youngest person ever to climb Everest is 16-year-old Temba Tsheri of Nepal on May 22, 2001.
- The oldest person to summit Everest was an American, 64-year-old Sherman Bull, on May 25, 2001.

-- Source: mnteverest.net