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Braving the elements

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Photo caption: At the Lava Tower camp of Mount Kilimanjaro (14,800 feet above sea level) Kate Greswold examines the remains of mother and calf eland, an antelope native to Africa. "They come up the mountain to lick salt from the rocks and sometimes freeze to death," says Greswold of Weston.



Photo credit: COURTESY PHOTO

The climb was harder than any of us thought it would be. But on the last push for the summit, we were all running on adrenaline -climbing through glorious weather and brilliant sunshine. And I was determined to be the first one there. You're very psyched to get to the top, but then you realize what a long trip it's going to be getting down.

No, that's not an excerpt from *Everest*, the IMAX film that's showing at the Boston Museum of Science. It's the recollection of Weston resident Kate Greswold, who recently summited Mount Kilimanjaro, at almost 20,000 feet above sea level, the highest point on the African continent.

Greswold's journey into thin air was about pushing her physical and mental limits, but it was also about sharing her incredible experience with her daughters and their classmates.

Kate trekked the mountain with her husband, John, for "Climb for CARE," a program raising funds and awareness for CARE, a world-wide poverty-fighting organization.

Thanks to a cooperative effort between Kate and elementary school teacher Sharon Brady, students in Brady's second-grade class benefited from an unusual hands-on unit on Africa. The Greswolds participated in Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere third annual Climb For CARE, which took the couple nearly 20,000 feet into the sky up Mount Kilimanjaro.

Kate didn't climb one of the world's highest mountains just to benefit millions helped each year by CARE, she also shared this experience with her children and their classmates at Woodland Elementary School. Kate visited her daughter Hadley's preschool class before her travel to Tanzania, and daughter Whitney's second-grade class both before and after Africa, as well as communicating with the second-graders via the Internet during her journey up the mountain.

toothbrushes, Band-Aids, pencils, markers and stickers. In addition, each envelope contained a picture of the student, and a letter with a self-addressed envelope in hopes of starting correspondence with the African children. The packages were distributed among 10 schools in Tanzania.

While visiting students, Greswold explained the tenets of her travel. She said she wanted the students to understand the necessity of learning about the history and culture of the place one is visiting. The basics such as the medicines, vaccinations, passport and visas necessary for international travel. Greswold also explained what it means to be a guest in a foreign country. Greswold gave students a history lesson on the African Continent. She discussed geography, topography, countries, climate and conditions, as well as slavery and taught students some Swahili, a native African language.

Brady used this opportunity to create a theme-oriented unit for her students to learn about Africa.

much information across as we wanted to, but we sent our messages to CARE, someone there posted our messages on their site, and then the kids went to the site and read our postings."

Brady "bookmarked" the CARE Web site, as well as a site about the park of Mount Kilimanjaro, and another with African pictures, so that students did not have to "surf" the Web to find the sites.

On to the summit

"The whole climb took a week," Greswold said. "We started on Feb. 8, summited on the 14th, and then it took us one day to get down. We were at the summit in the morning, and then we went from 19,340 foot elevation to just 10,000 that same day. Then the next day we went the rest of the way down."

A typical day climbing the mountain starts about 7 a.m., Greswold said. After breakfast the climbers break camp and are on the path by 8 or 8:30.

"We would hike, stop for lunch, and then hike for two to three more hours until we reached a spot already set up for camp.

"Three *n'gumus* are required per hiker," said Greswold. "They're in their 20s, mostly, and they carry the equipment on their heads. It's amazing, and it's one of the highest paying jobs in the region."

Greswold said *n'gumus* lead expeditions up Mount Kilimanjaro about every two weeks during peak season, and they receive about \$100 per trip.

"Since they were with us all the time, we really got to know them well," she said. "We talked about their country, and ours, exchanged learning about each others' cultures. At the bottom of the mountain, we sorted through our kits, and put everything in a big pile and donated it to them.

"All in all, the whole thing was a tremendous experience," concluded mountain climber, mother and CARE ambassador Kate Greswold.