

# MS CONNECTION

NATIONAL MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY - WISCONSIN CHAPTER

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## Three Wisconsin Residents Signed On Schneider's 2011 Kilimanjaro Hike Includes 14 with MS

Lori Schneider, the first person with multiple sclerosis to reach the top of Mt. Everest and climb the Seven Summits (the highest points on each of the seven continents), will lead a team of 32 on a climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro in July 2011. The group will include 14 individuals diagnosed with MS.

"The 'Kili' trip is so exciting and will be life altering for those who participate," Schneider said.

**“This climb is about people refusing to be defined by a disease.”**  
- Kristy Banaszak

Soaring 19,340 feet, Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest free-standing mountain in the world, was Schneider's first climb on her quest to complete the Seven Summits. She climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with her father, Neal. They summited on his 61st birthday in 1993. An extinct volcano with a view of five eco-systems and large game reserves, Mt. Kilimanjaro is the tallest mountain in Africa.

While not a technical climb, meaning no climbing experience is necessary, participants need to be comfortable walking four to eight hours a day, according to Alpine Ascents International, the expert guides for the trip. Each person with MS will have a companion climber and a medical team will also join the climb.

After conquering Mt. Kilimanjaro, which will take about seven days, the group will go on a variety of African excursions including a four-day safari and a hot air balloon ride in Serengeti National Park.

Schneider reports that the team of 32 climbers is complete and includes participants from all over the United States. Among the Wisconsin climbers signed up for the venture are Colleen Hayes, a National MS Society-funded researcher at the University of Wisconsin-



*While her kids, clockwise from left - Rachel, Austin and Joshua - already think their mom is an inspiration; Susie Weber believes the trip will help her grow as a person.*

Madison and sports trainer Susan Thomson. Schneider shared that she is especially excited that her father, Neal, who will be 79 at the time of the climb, will also join the group.

Three climbers from Wisconsin who have MS are going on the adventure with Schneider: Scott Smith from West Allis, Kristy Banaszak from Jackson and Susie Weber from Jackson. Smith, 41, was diagnosed with MS in 2003. He said, "One reason I want to do this, is because I still can. I grew up and still am an active

outdoorsman and this is something that will take me to another level of inner peace. What a great way to turn a negative into a positive."

Banaszak, a 48-year-old who was diagnosed with MS in 2005, added, "I feel that this trip isn't about the mountain or about the individual hikers. This climb is about people refusing to be defined by a disease."

Weber agreed, "You don't have to be defined by this disease. You can be successful."

Diagnosed with MS in 1987, Weber, now 46, added, "Being with all these amazing people on the team will help me grow as a person. And it may prove to be a good inspiration to others."

All of these climbers were inspired by Schneider. In fact, Thomson, who has friends with MS, said, "Lori is an amazingly beautiful woman inside and out. She is quite an inspiration and has great energy."

Although the climbing team is full, those interested can contact Schneider at Lori@ETAAdventure.com to be put on a waiting list for 2011 or a possible follow-up trip in 2012.



*Scott Smith, pictured with his wife Brenda, believes hiking Mt. Kilimanjaro will turn his MS diagnosis into a positive.*