

CalStar pilot taking his skills to Africa to help others

By Gene Hall

Veteran CalStar flight nurse Mark Haase, who works in South Lake Tahoe, is about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime, and in so doing will help the poverty-stricken nation of Tanzania.

Haase, who has been with CalStar for 12 years, will be one of a select group of 200 paragliders from around the globe who in early February will come together for a world record-breaking event organized by Wings of Kilimanjaro. The group will climb and then fly by paraglider from the “Roof of Africa” – Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest freestanding mountain on the planet. The mountain at its highest elevation is 19,341 feet.



Mark Haase

Haase, 43, will travel to the African nation on Jan. 28. Weather depending, he and the other volunteer pilots will then set off for the summit. What makes this event particularly significant is that for more than 20 years the government of Tanzania has strictly enforced a ban on the use of paragliders, hang gliders and mountain bikes in the Kilimanjaro National Park. The ban was lifted for this event so the Tanzanian people can receive badly needed help.

Each participant is required to raise money for a variety of needs in Tanzania. They do this by asking for public support for their efforts. Haase is asking interested individuals to go online. For those making a donation of \$100 or more, Haase has offered to take him/her on a 45-minute one-hour tandem paraglide over Lake Tahoe.

All money raised will support the One Foundation and Plant with Purpose. Both organizations have a strong presence in Africa, and both focus their efforts on community, environmental and humanitarian aid. Wings of Kilimanjaro hopes to raise \$1 million through the event.

Haase notes that he is paying his own air fare to Africa (about \$2,000), as well as wages for a porter and cook (approximately \$3,500). Gear for the trip costs \$7,000 but fortunately, he already owns the necessary equipment.

Citizens of Tanzania, according to Haase, struggle with basics of life that most Westerners take for granted. "Fresh water is not the norm in Tanzania," he said. "Rather, most citizens find water in small trenches of essentially dirty water that must be transported in measurements of kilometers. Also, forests have been decimated through lack of education, thus increasing the plight of vegetation, erosion control and so on."

In addition to completing the record-breaking climb and flight, Haase plans to spend time educating Tanzanians about basic healthcare.

"I'm talking about hygienic care such as hand washing, as well as proper storage and food handling," he said. "Water treatment, storage and overall healthcare are a high priority as well."

Haase will arrive well prepared for his endeavor in Africa. He has been involved with EMS efforts of one kind or another since 1986. He has served as a firefighter, ski patrolman, and

search and rescue team member. He has been climbing for more than 25 years and has made many trips to the tops of El Capitan and Half Dome in Yosemite, as well as summits in North Africa and Western Europe. A paraglider for six years, Haase has earned a number of certifications, including one as a professional tandem pilot.

Gene Hall works for CalStar.