Charity Challenge raises $170,000

By Nancy Anne

In March, ten men and women set off on a 3,750-mile, 15-stage cycle trip from Austin, Texas, to Mount Everest in Nepal. Some were experienced mountain climbers, others were new to the task at hand. What all the riders had in common were the funds they raised for the Himalayan Children's Foundation and the Tibet Kids Club, which work to raise funds for the I.E.P. (International Education Program) in Nepal, a program that helps children in need.

The team of 10 riders, a mix of mountain bikers and road cyclists, faced everything fromProcurement

"We were out of breath at that level that you had to be careful that the sherpas did not run in front of the mountain bike riders," said Doug that on the ride, "We had to yell at every one of them, "there's not a single tree in the area, just sand and rocks."" And while the temperature was quite high, the wind at night was still brisk and cold, with a strong gust of wind the riders had to push through. The team had to be careful not to overheat on the ride, but also to stay warm enough to avoid hypothermia.

Apart from the physical challenges, the riders also faced the problem of food and water, which had to be replenished at regular intervals. The riders were supported by their own support crews, who were on hand to provide food, water, and medical assistance when needed.

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Local group's charity climb

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Like the others, she too had found the lack of backing facilities challenging, "especially since it was our own money and we put in all the effort." She had found it difficult to keep the hikers engaged and motivated.

On the other hand, the weather was cooperative, and the group managed to complete the trekking section within the time frame allocated. The group reached the summit and celebrated their achievement.

Allahabad and Kargil were a problem toward the end of the outward trek. We had three days where every step and every task was exhaustively challenging, and the lack of proper rest and food led to many hikers developing aches and pains, which required medical attention.

The team members were now worried whether or not they would make it to the base camp.

"A positive mental attitude was the key to keeping us all motivated," said one member. The day we made it to our base camp (17,000 ft), we collapsed, but it was the moment we all came together to celebrate. We all felt like we had accomplished something.

The group then decided to continue to Kala Patr and camp at 12,000 feet above sea level. They also planned to trek to the base of the mountain, which was then covered with snow.

At the base camp, the team members were met with a beautiful view of the mountain range.

"It was hard when you looked at it and thought of all the people who had died on the mountain," she said. "But we had to remember why we were there and how much we wanted to make it to the summit.

When my daughter is older, I hope to return with my family to try again," she said. "I found the mountain an amazing experience, filled with incredible scenery and beautiful people."

The trek to the base camp was a challenging hike with treacherous rewards.

"We were welcomed by the children like royalty, with flower garlands and smiles," she continued. "I was so moved by the local community. It was an emotional experience, and many of us were moved to tears. Two children performed local Nepalese dances for us in colourful costumes."

Then, overcoming their shyness, they proudly showed us around their school, a beautiful home and introduced their caregivers as well. (Nepalwala for 'country'). The boys and girls, aged approximately four to 17, chatted with us in Hindi, English, and played simple hand games.

"As we sat smiling at them with their warm and affectionate feelings, it was hard to imagine the same children in their local, deteriorating conditions in which they had been found just over two years ago. The houses were true homes, not institutions, with a rooftop, fireplace, and walls filled with children's art, letters and school work. The caregivers explained that the house had been transformed into a home for children in need of care.

Nick (Tak Chee) Pewter raised $16,000. A man whose wish was apparently fulfilled by the experience, remembers the terror as "smooth, like baby's bottoms... all 120 kilometres of it".

He says his pre-trip fitness and dietary preparations must have proven very effective and had he succeeded in his attempt to summit Mount Everest. He says his height felt like a curse, and his body was "torn apart".

"I consider myself fortunate to have survived such an experience," he said. "It taught me how to put life in perspective.

The success of the expedition not only benefitted the children but also inspired other teams to take on similar challenges.

A special evening is planned for June 5th at the Edunora Underwater Exploration Institute, where all the trekkers will speak. There will also be presentations by ISFS Foundation founder Annette Yew, and Claire Underhill, ISFS volunteer at the Kivoho Hospital in Uganda. Delicious Nepalese food, wine and beautiful home-made items from Nepal and Uganda will also be available. Further information is available in this year's Bermuda Calendar.