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Fundraiser to celebrate Everest ascent to take place this month

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Bermuda is to host a series of multi-cultural events later this month which will celebrate both the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Shepa Tenzing Norgay, and honour global partnerships worldwide.

The events, run by the ISIS Foundation, will take place on November 22 and 23, billed as 'White Ice and Fire', and will also serve as fund-raiser for charitable projects dedicated to improving the lives of communities in the developing world – and in particular to the children of Nepal.

The ISIS Foundation is a Bermuda-based, registered charity which works with local community groups in Uganda and Nepal to fund and support development projects focused on maternal and child health care and education.

'White Ice and Fire', is a reference to the snow-covered Himalayas and the heat of Australia's Northern Territory.

Keynote speaker for the weekend will be Sir Edmund Hillary's son, Peter Hillary, who climbed Mount Everest last year in honour of his father and Tenzing's achievement half a century before.

The programme will also include the famed Australian Aboriginal group, Yothu Yindi, whose involvement with at-risk children in their home of Arnhem Land, Australia includes working with aboriginal children in Yothu Yindi's recording studio as well as through its school touring programme and educational programmes at their annual Garma festival.

Events will include an educational workshop for Bermudian schoolchildren on Himalayan adventures and life's challenges by Peter Hillary, public seminars on the Everest ascent and performances by Yothu Yindi open to the Bermuda public. "The idea of the weekend is to celebrate global partnerships. We want to give as many people in Bermuda as possible the chance to meet and hear Peter Hillary and to see Yothu Yindi perform," said Sharon Beesley, a founder of The ISIS Foundation.

"Bermuda is truly a global village, and is the perfect place to honour the achievements of Hillary and Tenzing."

The weekend will culminate in a gala ball in the NATO hangar at Clearwater, where approximately 800 people are expected to attend.

Peter Hillary will be the guest speaker, and guests will rock the night away to the sounds of Yothu Yindi.

"I am delighted to represent my family at what promises to be an extraordinary series of events in Bermuda, to finish this year of celebration in great style," Mr. Hillary said.

"This small Island, with such a significant global reach, is the perfect place to honour partnerships across the world."

The event has the enthusiastic support of Government, and specifically the Department of Tourism.

"It is a wonderful thing that our beautiful island has been chosen as the venue for the last celebration of the anniversary of the Everest ascent," Tourism Minister Renee Webb said.

"We will make sure that all our visitors receive a warm Bermuda welcome.

"We particularly welcome the various community initiatives that are an integral part of the weekend, offering Bermudians the chance to meet and interact with such accomplished international friends."

A number of international celebrities have been invited to 'White Ice and Fire', along with members of the original expedition, and some of the world's most prominent current climbers.

Pete Athans, who has climbed Everest seven times, and Brent Bishop, the first American legacy to summit Everest and the founder of an environmental foundation established to clean up the mountain, are both expected to attend.

International guests will stay at Cambridge Beaches – one of the sponsors of the event.

'White Ice and Fire' weekend has been organised by The ISIS Foundation, a Bermuda-based charity.

"We are overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and support for White Ice and Fire that we have received from Bermuda" said Audette Exel of ISIS.

"We particularly want to thank our sponsors, including XL, Max Re, the Bank of Bermuda, LookBermuda, Cambridge Beaches, Partner Re, Everest Capital, Goslings and the Little Venice Group for their help in bringing this celebration together."

"We also want to acknowledge the strong support of the Bermuda Government, and the Ministry of Tourism."

"We expect that the weekend will receive a great deal of international press, and will show the world that Bermuda is back on the map post-Fabian as a truly international location."

The Hillary Himalayan Foundation is a New Zealand-based charity founded by Peter Hillary to fund and support health and education projects in the Everest region, including funding projects run by the Himalayan Trust, Sir Edmund Hillary's charitable organisation in Nepal.

Tickets (\$500 a seat or \$350 depending on table placement) for the 'White Ice and Fire' weekend are now on sale at Miles Market, and can also be obtained on line at www.whiteiceandfire.com.

Tables of ten are available. For further information on all events see www.whiteiceandfire.com; (292-6992, or contact event organiser, Select Sites Group.