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Hope looms large

Wed, July 26, 2006

By SUSAN KIRWIN, FREE PRESS REPORTER



London childhood cancer hero Brandon Schupp began a \$1-million climb of a remote B.C. mountain yesterday.

And as he got set to scale the mountain in a fundraising campaign, 13-year-old Schupp was juggling media interview requests from across Canada.

Schupp called CBC Newsworld by satellite phone after reaching the base of Mount Good Hope by helicopter.

"I can't believe he's up there," Schupp's mother, Ann Freeman, said from Vancouver Island.

Schupp is the catalyst for the Childhood Cancer Foundation's largest fundraiser ever, the Mountain of Hope campaign -- named after the B.C. mountain he plans to scale -- that aims to raise \$1 million.

Schupp plans to call Canada AM from the summit on Friday if the phone works.

His media adviser, Susan McLennan, said the Global and CBC TV networks and other media are also asking for interviews.



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Schupp was featured on CP 24 in Toronto all weekend.

"He's really captured the hearts of many," said McLennan, adding he's done so many interviews, he needed a rest.

Schupp spoke through a crackling connection to his friend Julie MacInnes, 13, on Newsworld yesterday, long enough for the London girl to wish him good luck.

MacInnes has battled cancer and gave Schupp symbolic wristbands to take up the 3,000-metre mountain.

"They were supposed to check in every day, but we're not sure if that will be possible," Freeman said of the climbers, referring to the poor phone reception.

Schupp's goal is to raise \$1 million for the CCF. He was inspired by his young friend Cole Petrie, now five, diagnosed with cancer last year.

About \$70,000 of the fundraising goal has been raised so far, said spokesperson Mary Lye.

Lye said there are many fundraisers going on across Canada, including collection boxes at every Days Inn.

The hotel chain has been donating rooms to Schupp wherever his Mountain of Hope campaign takes him.

Freeman said envelopes of money have been pouring in from her relatives, their neighbours and friends.

Freeman said Brandon was excited leading up to the climb, but acting normal enough to fight with his little brother.

"It goes without saying that I'm worried, but I know he's with top-notch climbers," she said. "I really hope he meets his goal."

TO DONATE:

- Go to www.childhoodcancer.ca, click special events, then Mountain of Hope, or call toll free 1-800-363-1062

- To track Schupp's journey, check his website at www.brandonsdream.com

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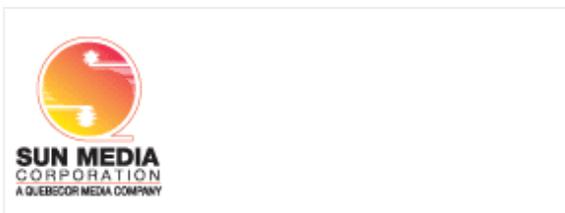
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