

Young climber sets lofty goal

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When Brandon Schupp thinks of climbing a British Columbia peak this month, his goal goes beyond the summit.

The north London boy is also dreaming of raising \$1 million to help 10,000 Canadian children with cancer .

"Cancer is bad, especially for kids," said Schupp, 13. "(Climbing) makes me feel like I can give them hope because it's a chance for research money to make them better."

Schupp has inspired the Childhood Cancer Foundation's biggest national fundraising drive, the Mountain of Hope campaign, with groups nationwide pitching in.

A few weeks ago, the total pledged was between \$50,000 and \$60,000 -- still far from the goal, but the campaign won't end at the mountain top.

"It's just so inspiring. You think, he's 13? He's doing this?" said Mary Lye, the foundation's spokesperson.

Schupp raised money and found sponsors to climb his first mountain last year in Washington state.

Then, a child his mother babysat was diagnosed with cancer and Schupp realized he could help.

With the support of others, he raised \$20,000 for little Cole Petrie's family.

When the cancer foundation heard about that, it created the campaign and hopes to be with Schupp until he reaches another goal of climbing Mount Everest , the world's tallest mountain.

Almost a year later, five-year-old Cole is still fighting, recovering from a recent stem cell transplant.

"It makes us happy to think something good may come out of Cole's struggle," said his mother, Jen Petrie.

Schupp's parents are pleased with his accomplishments. "But we're worrying about his safety," said his mother, Ann Freeman.

Chosen by the foundation for its name, 10,000-foot Good Hope Mountain in B.C. has been climbed only three times by surveyors.

But Schupp's mentor and trainer, Geoff Unger of Seattle-based Mountain Madness, said the peak is suitable for Schupp's skill level.



TRAVELLIN' MAN: Brandon Schupp, 13, of London plans to begin climbing Good Hope Mountain in British Columbia on July 24 and hopes to raise \$1 million to fight childhood cancer in the process. CREDIT: SUE REEVE/The London Free Press

Two others will climb with Schupp and Unger.

"I have a tremendous amount of faith in Geoff. He'll keep Brandon within his limits," Freeman said.

Over the 10-day trip that begins July 24, they'll be battling the elements, climbing under icy overhangs, through ice falls and up snow slopes.

Schupp has been training hard all year. He took a five-day technical training course on Mount Baker this month.

On the summit of Good Hope, he'll leave one of two bracelets from a 13-year-old friend with cancer and an angel in memory of a three-year-old who recently died.

People like Petrie have high hopes about the message Schupp's climb will send out.

"Until our lives were affected by it, I don't think we realized how much further they really need to go until they can provide effective (cancer) treatment for these kids," Petrie said.

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GOOD HOPE CAMPAIGN

- To donate, go to www.childhoodcancer.ca, click special events, then Mountain of Hope , or call 1-800 363-1062
- To track Brandon 's journey, check his website at www.brandonsdream.com