

Moving mountains and climbing them



One DaVitan climbs world's toughest peaks to raise funds for kidney education

“This business has given me my livelihood;

Sandstrom summits Mt. Cayambe, Ecuador's third highest peak. During his trip, he climbed three mountains and raised \$8,000 for **The Kidney TRUST**.

For Nord Sandstrom (Project Manager, Team Genesis), every day is an adventure.



Even despite intense conditions, Sandstrom successfully summits Huascaran Sur to raise money for kidney awareness.

As a Project Manager for DaVita®, he's spent the past five years traveling throughout the **Eagle** and **SunDance** Divisions, talking to building inspectors, fire marshals and even doctors about how to build new DaVita facilities, and how to renovate old ones.

Oh, yeah – and he climbs mountains to raise awareness for kidney disease.

Over the last year-and-a-half, Sandstrom has climbed more than 48,000 feet – and raised some \$20,000 – for kidney education. The feat is even more amazing when you learn that Sandstrom started climbing just three-and-a-half years ago, when he and his friend set a goal to climb the 54 “14,000-foot-plus” peaks in Colorado. It wasn't long before Sandstrom himself was addicted.

“I climbed the Mount of the Holy Cross,

and I was hooked immediately,” he says. “It gets in your blood.”

Soon, even climbing – in and of itself – wasn't enough. Seeing the potential to combine his love for climbing with his commitment to DaVita's mission, Sandstrom decided to do a kidney awareness fundraiser by climbing El Pico de Orizaba, an 18,512-foot peak in Mexico.

“I thought – this business has given me my livelihood; maybe it's time to give back,” he says.

On that first trek, in February 2006, not only did Sandstrom successfully scale El Pico de Orizaba, he also raised \$8,000 for the local chapter of the National Kidney Foundation (NKF). (At that time, the **Kidney TRUST™** hadn't been created yet.) It was then that Sandstrom really saw the impact his love of climbing could have on the world.

“It's just one person going out and doing something,” Sandstrom says. “But still – it makes a difference.”

Not long after – in October 2006 – Sandstrom decided to hold another climbing expedition and fundraiser, this time to Ecuador, where he would aim to climb the three highest peaks in the country. Coincidentally, DaVita teammates supporting the **Bridge of Life™** mission to Guayaquil, Ecuador, were there at the same time. Although he didn't run into any DaVitas on his climb, he did raise an additional \$8,000 – this time, for the then-newly developed Kidney TRUST. The organization's first independent fundraiser, Sandstrom even helped develop the fundraising section of the Kidney TRUST's Web page.

But Sandstrom didn't stop there. Having conquered some of Central America's toughest peaks, in August 2007, he set his eyes on Peru, a country housing some of the most difficult mountains in the world – including the 22,000-foot Huascarán Sur. According to Sandstrom, even resting at the 19,000-foot high camp of the mountain was difficult.

“You can't sleep. It's hard to breathe – you find yourself reading the same paragraph of a book several times because

you can't concentrate,” he says.

In fact, due to the health risks associated with elevation changes – ranging anywhere from headaches to pulmonary edema and organ failure – Sandstrom spends months training for each climb in both the gym and the mountains. He often scales numerous smaller mountains just prior to attempting the larger peaks to allow his body to acclimatize to the change in elevation.

Luckily for Sandstrom, the training paid off. Despite difficulties – such as finding that the ice bridges he used to ascend Huascarán Sur had collapsed by the time he made his descent – his climb was a success. Of the four groups that attempted to summit the mountain that week, his team was the only one that made it – all while raising another \$3,000 for the Kidney TRUST.

Sandstrom has already planned his next trip, slated for June 2008, back to Peru. There, he'll

attempt several more climbs, including Alpamayo and Toclaraju, which have faces upward of 70 to 80 degrees. Even though it will be difficult, Sandstrom is looking forward to the challenge, and stays grounded by a principle that applies just as much to climbing as it does to life.

“Half of success is getting to the top,” he says. “The other half is having the energy to keep moving forward after you get there.” ■

Check out the fundraising page for Sandstrom's Alpamayo expedition at www.kidneytrust.org

Sandstrom enjoys a well-deserved break at high camp on Huascarán Sur in Peru.



maybe it's time to give back.”



Months of training go into every climb Sandstrom attempts. At left, he scales icy mountains in his home state of Colorado in preparation for an upcoming trip.

During his trip to Peru in August Sandstrom scaled the ice covered Garganta Trail, part of the Huascarán Sur peak. His group was one of only four to successfully summit the mountain that week.



Proudly displaying a National Kidney Foundation banner, Sandstrom quickly celebrates his summit of El Pico de Orizaba, an 18,000-plus peak in Mexico, and his first fundraiser for kidney awareness in February.