

# PRESS RELEASE



## **UNFCU STAFF MEMBER ORGANIZES MT. KILIMANJARO CLIMB TO ENCOURAGE SAFER ENVIRONMENTS WITHIN EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITIES**

The term “moving mountains” is often used as a figure of speech. However, Tim Challen, a UNFCU Member Service Representative from the Geneva Representative Office, is literally taking on the phrase by raising awareness about crime in East African communities and empowering individuals to affect positive change -- for themselves and for their neighborhoods. To this end, Tim has received support from UN-HABITAT, UNEP, NGOs and local authorities in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam to launch the Kilimanjaro Initiative.

Specifically, from 25 February through 1 March 2006, Tim will be leading 35 climbers to the summit of Africa’s highest peak. The goal: raise funds to support several new community-based crime prevention projects which are part of UN-HABITAT’s local Safer Cities Programme.

### **A Personal Mission**

Nearly three years ago while working in Nairobi, Tim sustained serious gunshot wounds to his left leg during an armed robbery. Since then, he decided to channel his energies into bringing attention to some of the problems facing East Africa’s cities and combating the underlying causes of crime via the Safer Cities Programme. Launched in 1996, Safer Cities is creating a culture of safe urban environments across Africa and is comprised of youths, community groups and local law enforcement officials as well as the private sector.

Symbolically, 10 young people from disadvantaged areas in Kenya and Tanzania will join Tim, staff members from UN-Habitat, UNEP, additional UN agencies, UNFCU, as well as Michael J. Connery Jr., president and CEO of the credit union, on the climb to the “Rooftop of Africa.” General Sarakikya, a retired Tanzanian general and diplomat who was the first to plant the Tanzanian flag on the mountain’s summit following his country’s independence, will escort the team up the Marangu Route.

“I wanted to help make East African communities safer places in which to live,” says Mr. Challen, who has long had a dream to reach the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, a 5,896-meter high sleeping volcano. “If this climb can inspire one person not to give up on their dreams and to believe that their life can improve, I feel our climb will have succeeded,” adds Challen, who hopes to raise US\$50,000 through donations to further Safer Cities.

Funds generated from the climb will support grassroots projects, including the renovation of a soccer field in Kibera, Nairobi which is currently a hotspot for crime; start-up small businesses run by youths with ensuing profits going towards establishing nightly, neighborhood patrols, thereby deterring crime; and a water project in Kiluvya Ward Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam whose sales will help fund a security-watch group.



UN-Habitat, which helped select the young people for the challenge, will also oversee the distribution of funds for the various projects.

“This is the first effort of its kind on behalf of Safer Cities and we are proud to work with Tim and UNFCU to continue to strengthen civic responsibility within communities, engage youth and prevent crime,” said Anna Tibaijuka, Under Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Habitat. “The climb represents a mission of hope and a true lesson in overcoming adversity.”

Said Eric Falt, Director of Communications for UNEP and Director of the UN Information Centre: "Most people would have reacted negatively to the kind of trauma experienced by Tim when he first visited Nairobi. Under these circumstances, it takes intellectual courage and intelligence to understand the root causes of crime and poverty, and Tim has turned this defining event in his life into an inspired leadership initiative."

### **Climb Embraces UN Goals**

The launch of the Kilimanjaro Initiative in November 2005 coincided with the UN International Year of Sport, Development and Peace Conference – itself a prime mover in enhancing safe spaces through sports and youth development. A major focus of the climb is to encourage youth leadership through sport. To this end, UNFCU has donated funds to sponsor Outward Bound Training to prepare the youths for the physical and mental demands of the ascent. Additionally, UNFCU will be picking up the cost of equipment, lodging and travel expenses for them to participate.

“UNFCU staff, management and our Board of Directors supports Tim’s remarkable climb and his ability to transform a harmful experience into building hope and a brighter future for others,” said Mr. Connery. “In taking up Tim’s cause, we are also realizing the Credit Union spirit of ‘*People Helping People*’ and furthering our commitment to the UN and UN agency communities in East Africa.”

### **Sponsorship**

To assist Tim’s fundraising efforts, the credit union established a special UNFCU account, The Kilimanjaro Challenge Fund. If you are a member of UNFCU and wish to make a donation, please visit the UNFCU website, [www.unfcu.org](http://www.unfcu.org), and click on Internet Banking. Select the Online Forms link on the top menu and choose the Member-to-Member Transfer Request Form. Enter Kilimanjaro Challenge in the Beneficiary Last Name and First Name and 803330 in the UNFCU Beneficiary Member Number fields.

To learn more about the Kilimanjaro Initiative, please visit [www.kilimanjaroinitiative.org](http://www.kilimanjaroinitiative.org). More information about Safer Cities can be obtained via the UN-Habitat website: <http://www.unhabitat.org/programmes/safercities>

We wish Tim and the entire Kilimanjaro Initiative team every success in their challenging endeavor and look forward to providing you with an update!

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