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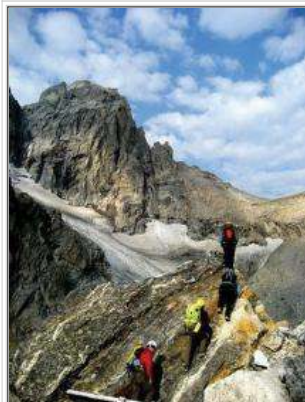
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## Climbers help at-risk teens reach new heights



Chris Colligan, of Jackson, takes in the view of the Grand Teton, right, and Teewinot, left, as storm clouds pass over in Grand Teton National Park. Several climbers will be heading up the Grand Teton this summer in the Summit for Someone program, a charity for at-risk urban youths. Photo by MARK GOCKE, Star-Tribune correspondent.



Summit for Someone climbers head toward the top of Grand Teton in 2007. Photo courtesy of Big City Mountaineers.

By WES SMALLING  
Star-Tribune staff writer

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Like many visitors to Grand Teton National Park, Alex Wolf gazed up at the majestic chiseled summits of the Grand Teton Range last spring and couldn't help but wonder what it's like to climb them.

The 31-year-old New Yorker is a recovering alcoholic. He had quit drinking months earlier and that spring the outdoors became a sanctuary for him, an escape from the pressures of city life and the temptations that every alcoholic battles each day.

After his Wyoming trip he returned home to New York and began rock climbing, ice climbing and backpacking every chance he got. Those activities, his love of the outdoors and support from friends are helping him overcome his addiction and get the most out of life.

This summer he's returning to Wyoming to climb the 13,760-foot summit of Grand Teton. But the adventure isn't just for himself. It's also for someone else, someone he's never met.

Wolf is one of more than 300 mountain climbers participating in Backpacker Magazine's Summit for Someone program this year. The annual series of climbs is a fundraiser for Big City Mountaineers, a nonprofit organization that provides wilderness mentoring trips for at-risk urban youths.

"Living in Manhattan I'm in this fast-paced life every day," Wolf said. "Climbing and backpacking are a way to get out of that and to get away from all the drinking and partying and get into nature. It's had a tremendous impact on me both physically and spiritually. So when I learned about the Summit for Someone program I started thinking about these kids who had underprivileged backgrounds, who don't have a chance to do these things. The outdoors has had an amazing impact on my life and I saw how it could have an amazing impact on someone else's life."

To go on a Summit for Someone trip each climber raises \$2,900 to \$7,500 in pledges, depending on the type of expedition. Each climb raises enough funds to fully sponsor five teens and a youth agency leader for a summer outdoor youth mentoring program with Denver-based Big City Mountaineers.

Big City Mountaineers takes urban teens on challenging but safe guided wilderness expeditions. They are city kids who may otherwise never have the opportunity to experience the outdoors. On each trip, teens are matched with mentoring adults who teach them about nature and provide them opportunities to achieve success by drawing on resources they might never know they had.

For many of the teens, it's a life-changing event, said Big City Mountaineers spokeswoman Hillary Harding.

"Some of them fall in love with the wilderness. Some of them say, 'I never want to pee in the woods again.' But they almost all find something out about themselves, something inspiring," she said.

Summit for Someone climbs can also be life-changing, inspiring events for the climbers who raise money for the youth program.

Dennis Pinto, a retired police officer from New Jersey, is climbing in the Summit for Someone program this summer for his third year in a row. Previously he's climbed Washington's Mount Rainier and California's Mount Whitney. This year he'll be tackling the summit of the Grand Teton. He said the trips are a way for him to reach out and help kids in need, which is something he felt compelled to do during his many years as a police officer.

"I've definitely experienced more than my fair share of seeing troubled kids and wanting to help them and sometimes not being able to," he said. "I've been involved in some charities over the years -- Special Olympics, helping kids and adults with alcoholism. With the passion I have for climbing and the outdoors, naturally I read Backpacker magazine and they had a story about (Summit for Someone). I said to myself, 'What a great cause. I can actually help kids who are at-risk and do something I love.' So the combination draws me every year."

All the Wyoming climbs and one in Montana are being led by Jackson Hole Mountain Guides -- trips to the summits of Grand Teton, Middle Teton, Mount Moran and Buck Mountain in the Teton Range, Gannett Peak in the Wind River Range, and Granite Peak in Montana.

Other climbs around the West include Mount Rainier, Mount Baker and Mount Olympus in Washington, Long's Peak in Colorado, Mount Hood in Oregon, Mount Shasta in California and a five-day expedition on Alaska's Denali (Mount

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McKinley).

Slots are still available on many trips for climbers who want to participate in the Summit for Someone program. And many climbers, including Pinto and Wolf, are still working on raising pledges.

"To be honest, the fundraising is tougher than the climb itself," Pinto said.

#### How to help

Have the rocky summits of the Grand Tetons ever beckoned you to climb them?

Now's your chance to tackle one of those peaks -- and for a good cause.

Several expeditions are still available for this year's charity climbs. To learn more about the Summit for Someone climbs, how to donate to climbers and about Big City Mountaineers' programs for at-risk youths, go online to [www.bigcitymountaineers.org](http://www.bigcitymountaineers.org) or [www.summitforsomeone.org](http://www.summitforsomeone.org).

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#### Climb with a legend

This summer author and legendary mountain climber John Roskelley, along with Jackson Hole Mountain Guides, is leading a Summit for Someone climb on 12,799-foot Granite Peak, a four-day alpine rock expedition to the top of the tallest mountain in Montana.

A few slots are available for interested climbers who can raise \$3,500 in pledges before the charity climb takes place, July 25-28.

Granite Peak is an intermediate but challenging climb. Participants should have at least a one-day basic climbing course under their belts, Roskelley said.

"This is one of our highest peaks that's considered challenging. It's not climbed very often. It's very remote and high and it does have a tendency to get some thunderstorms going through or snow squalls even in mid-summer."

The slopes of Granite Peak are home to the infamous Froze to Death Plateau, a rocky, exposed expanse at the base of the alpine zone.

"It is so open it's basically exactly how it's described. You could lose your life on that plateau if you're not careful."

Roskelley is considered one of the top veterans of Himalayan climbing and has spent 42 years climbing summits around the world, including Mount Everest and K2. He's also credited with the first and only ascent of the East Face of Uli Biaho in Pakistan in 1979 and the only winter ascent of the Northeast Face of Tawoche in Nepal in 1989.

To sign up or learn more about this summer's Granite Peak climb with Roskelley, go online to [www.summitforsomeone.org](http://www.summitforsomeone.org) or call (307) 250-0763.

Several expeditions are still available for this year's charity climbs. To learn more about the Summit for Someone climbs, how to donate to climbers and about Big City Mountaineers' programs for at-risk youths, go online to [www.bigcitymountaineers.org](http://www.bigcitymountaineers.org) or [www.summitforsomeone.org](http://www.summitforsomeone.org).]]-->

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