

Boulder student, teacher going to Kilimanjaro as part of scientific research team

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Boulder High School junior Maddy Searchinger and Boulder Explore teacher Michael O'Toole are joining a team of scientists, teachers and students on a science expedition to the summit of Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro.

The nine-day trek to the summit -- sponsored by the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, the National Science Foundation and the GLOBE Program -- starts Sunday.

Maddy, a teacher and a scientist will write daily blog entries, allowing students worldwide to follow along. The team also will go on a three-day African safari and visit orphanages to deliver supplies.



Maddy
Student Xpedition Members

Maddy Searchinger (Courtesy photo)

Follow the trip

See details at
xpeditiononline.com.

Live webinars are scheduled at
11 a.m. Sept. 26 and Oct. 1.

The Kilimanjaro trek is "a giant walking classroom," said O'Toole, who will be taking students and teachers up for the eighth time with this trip.

While on the mountain, students will assist the scientists on permafrost research, collecting data and observing shifting biomes and shrinking glaciers. Students also will set up research

stations to deploy instruments.

The expedition will broadcast live from the mountain each day to classrooms around the world, answering questions in real time, posting photos and videos and hosting two educational webinars.

An estimated 250,000 people are expected to follow the expedition.

"For young people to be able to look at one of their peers and see that they're taking this amazing adventure, it's very empowering," O'Toole said.

The international team is made up of students, teachers and scientists from Colorado, Alaska, Texas, Japan, Russia, Benin, Tanzania and Kenya.

Maddy, who is 16 and planning to graduate from high school a year early in the spring, said she's wanted to go on the trip for a couple of years, but she found out too late the first year and spent

last year as an exchange student in Italy. This year, she sold her piano to finance the trip.

"It's the greatest adventure that anyone my age could ever embark on," she said. "It's a new country and new people. You're climbing. It's just incredible."

She said she loves to hike and climbed Longs Peak and several other fourteeners to prepare. She also collected donations of first aid supplies, clothes and shoes from classmates, collecting 110 pounds of supplies and clothes.

She's excited to visit the orphanage, see wildlife on the safari and climb to 19,339 feet.

"I can't wait for all of it," she said.



Michael O'Toole
Xpedition Leader

Michael O'Toole (Courtesy photo)