Tahoe women set to summit, ski Mount Kenya

When most people think about Africa, they don't think of snow. Two Lake Tahoe women will change that as they attempt to summit and ski Mount Kenya in November.

They are climbing to make a statement about climate change and raise funds for micro-loans in an expedition they call Summit for our Sisters.

Mount Kenya is home to the first and only skiing competition in the country, which was in 1936. Africa's second highest mountain after Kilimanjaro, it rises above the country's highlands to 16,355 feet. Due to recent global warming trends, only a handful of mountain enthusiasts have accomplished this trek on Lewis Glacier, one of the last permanent snowfields in Africa. Studies show the snow and ice on the volcanic peak of Mount Kenya are melting away so fast scientists estimate they will disappear in the next two or three decades.



Jen Gurecki trains for her Africa expedition. Photo/Provided

Given this trend, Jen Gurecki and Meghan Kelly are following their passion and jumping on the opportunity to become part of the select few to accomplish such a large feat. The

expedition, sponsored by Coalition Snow, an emerging ski and snowboard company for women, and will benefit Zawadisha.

The Zawadisha Fund is a micro-credit organization started in Lake Tahoe, whose mission is to empower, entrust, and expand opportunities for women in Kenya.

“The women I work with in Kenya are incredibly impacted by climate change. Many of them are farmers and other sell food staples at the local market. Drought, caused by climate change, leads to less productive crops, decreasing daily incomes and increasing food costs. While I sit and contemplate the effects of climate change, these women are living it day in and day out,” Gurecki said in a statement. “At Zawadisha, we are actively developing strategies on how we can support our members in adapting to climate change. Through this expedition we are hope to raise awareness about the issue, while also raising funds for the small business loans Zawadisha provides to women living in poverty.”

Kelly added, “At Coalition Snow, we’re passionate about three things: snowsports, women’s empowerment, and the environment. The expedition to Mt. Kenya combines all three and really shows the world what we’re all about. While we partner with Zawadisha, we hope to share our experiences in entrepreneurship with the micro-loan recipients and learn from their experiences. We’re environmentally and socially conscious, but we’re also unique in the snowsports industry – we’re launching a skiing and snowboarding company in Africa.”

The two adventurers have been passionate about playing in snow since moving to the Sierra Nevada nearly a decade ago. They also have been equally passionate about empowering women, both locally and internationally.

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Note: Summit for Our Sisters fundraising campaign begins Oct. 14. More information is online.