

Health teams tackle mountain of woe

Tue, December 30, 2008

AFRICAN AID MISSION: Climbing Kilimanjaro will help raise funds for the medical clinic they're supporting

By **JOE BELANGER**

A London doctor is headed to Africa to climb a mountain -- literally and figuratively.

On Jan. 11, Dr. Louise Moist, a kidney specialist and researcher, will leave for Tanzania in East Africa to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

But first, Moist will tackle a mountain of medical misery in the hope of shoring up a new medical clinic aimed at improving the lives of women and children, many stricken or threatened by AIDS.

"It's really to promote proper health care and provide HIV care and primary care for women and children. It's a significant issue," said Moist, the mother of two children, seven and 10, and a 22-year-old stepchild.

"We'll be teaching the community about health and women and children about proper diets based on what's available to eat."

Moist will be joined by 27 other health-care professionals, teachers and administrators from across the country, who will each carry 22-kilogram bags of aid, including medical supplies, personal health and hygiene products, school and office supplies and more.

Queen's University physician Karen Yeates and Kingston businessperson Carol Bisailon founded Prevention Through Empowerment, a project of the Canada Africa Community Health Alliance, in the hopes of improving basic health and HIV prevention among Tanzanian women.

Yeates, a friend of Moist, helped build the Pamoja Tunaweza Women's Centre in the Mount Kilimanjaro area staffed by Tanzanian women with training in human rights and HIV/AIDS-related issues. The centre's aim is to improve knowledge and access to women's health care.

After spending two weeks at the clinic, the team will spend four days climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and two days descending as part of a fundraiser for the clinic. They return to Canada Feb. 2.

Each team member was to find \$6,000 in sponsors for the climb. It costs \$2,000 a month to keep the clinic operating.

Moist said she's never climbed a mountain, but is training daily in preparation.

The 52-year-old doctor, who also is a trained pharmacist and family doctor, quotes a Bible passage, -- Luke 12:48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" -- to explain her motivation.

"It's to contribute to improved health care and education for women and children in deprived countries," she said.

"We're privileged to be born in Canada. Just lucky."