

NORTHSHORE

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Prelude | philanthropy



Moving Mountains

Three budding film students from Lake Forest and Lake Bluff went up Mt. Kilimanjaro with a couple of cameras and came down with a plan to save lives. *By Peter Cappone*

Oh, the kids these days, huh? Their lives are an open Facebook. Everywhere you turn, they're text messaging and uploading and Twittering on about their ongoing travails. Like the current status of their cat's litter box. Or the sorry hair-dryer selection at Target. Or what they decided to order, eight minutes ago, off the five-for-five value menu at Arby's.

Take Jeremy Vranich, Catherine Lynch and Sam Fell, for example. In January, the three twentysomethings from Lake Forest and Lake Bluff lugged around two Sony HD cameras and documented every second of a recent 17-day vacation they took.

You should see the footage. It's revealing. Video of children in Tanzania walking five hours outside of their village just to bring potable water back to their

families. Scenes of villagers staring at fetid pools of brackish water and damaged pipes. And interviews with government officials who are reviewing age-old plans to tap into the reservoir of Pangani River water beneath the ground.

In fact, Jeremy, Catherine and Sam hauled around those same cameras during every step of their six-day ascent up Mt. Kilimanjaro. They felt the need capture it all on film. The star-speckled skies. The exhaustion. The summit. The relief.

And now that they're back home, they're going to do what members of the YouTube generation always do: splice it all together and share it with the world. They're going to make a documentary called *Water Is Life: The Uru Project* for It Can Be Done, a nonprofit started by Vranich's mother, Barbara Joye of Lake Bluff, as well as Mount Prospect's

Margaret Braband that's committed to raising enough money to build 25 wells in the Uru region around Mt. Kilimanjaro by August of this year. Due to a series of fundraisers, It Can Be Done is on schedule to meet its August aims, but it's hoping to expand its efforts throughout Tanzania via any means it can — whether it be screening documentaries or climbing mountains to raise awareness.

"It's amazing how important a sense of purpose can be in your life," says Vranich, who along with Lynch managed to make it to the summit. "Because the moment you realize you've found something that you should be doing — that you need to do — you realize that you can climb the world's tallest free-standing mountain." Oh, the kids these days, huh?

To volunteer or donate to It Can Be Done, visit www.itcandoneafrica.org.

