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UNH Graduate Reaches New Heights on Everest

By [Kim Billings](#)
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- A 1997 University of New Hampshire alumna has left her day job as a teacher to take on a position of dazzling new heights. Nikki Campell, who graduated from UNH with a degree in kinesiology, specializing in outdoor education, is the base camp manager for a Mount Everest expedition that includes a massive mountainside clean-up of discarded oxygen bottles, shredded tents and other abandoned gear.

Two previous teams in 1995 and 1998 led by renowned climber Bob Hoffman recovered more than 300 oxygen bottles and removed over a ton of debris from the mountain. The ultimate goal is to have Everest near its original condition in 2003 -- in time for the 50th anniversary of the first ascent in 1953.

Mount Everest is located in the Khumbu Region of northeastern Nepal, and spans the border between Nepal and Tibet. At 29,028 feet, the summit of Mount Everest is the highest point on earth. The base camp is about 17,600 feet above sea level. "I've never been the kind of climber who thought I'd take on Everest," says Campbell, who grew up in Wilmington, Del., "and I don't plan to summit on this trip -- not my cup of tea really. But to be surrounded by the highest mountains in the world and inundated by the spirituality of a culture I have only read about is incredible."

An avid rock-climber, Campbell was teaching at a community college in California when one of her climbing partners was accepted onto the Everest climbing team. He told her they needed a base camp manager and, on a whim, she applied for the position. "Being on Everest never even occurred to me before," she says. "It's an incredibly amazing place in so many ways, but I've never been the kind of climber who set

my sights on it."

The added bonus, she says, is working with a group of people dedicated to environmental concerns. The 2000 Everest Environmental Expedition's mission is to climb Everest and continue a significant cleanup that began five years ago of discarded oxygen bottles and debris from the high camps on the mountain.

Members of the team are celebrities in mountaineering circles: Jamling Tenzing Norgay, star of the IMAX Everest movie, is the official trekking team leader. Famed Apa Sherpa, record holder for 10 summits on Mount Everest is the lead Sherpa.

While Campbell has extensive climbing experience -- she has summited peaks in the White Mountains while a UNH undergraduate, as well as mountains out West -- she says it was her educational experience at UNH that best prepared her for this latest challenge.

"The Outdoor Education Program is tops in the country, and having a degree from UNH has gone a long way in getting me to where I am now -- 17,600 feet above sea level! I would have been nowhere without having the right skills and experience, and I have UNH to thank for that necessary foundation."

She also will assist researchers there who, coincidentally, are collecting snow and ice samples from the upper Khumbu Glacier for UNH's Climate Change Research Center. The chemical composition of the samples will be analyzed by UNH Climatologist Cameron Wake as part of an ongoing study of regional climate patterns and climate change in Central Asia.

The information can be used to develop a detailed record of changes in the strength of the annual monsoon, considered invaluable because the Asian monsoon provides rain to 50 percent of the world's population.

As base camp manager, Campell is responsible for, well, just about everything: daily communications via the Internet and satellite phone; radio contact with the climbing teams; keeping a daily log of activities at camp and on the trail to the summit.

She also manages all health issues, potential evacuations, food preparation and menu planning, and general oversight and repair of all supplies and equipment.

Campbell also is responsible for cataloging and organizing the waste that is brought down from the mountain. It needs to be transported to Kathmandu to be recycled and disposed of properly.

"It sounds like a lot," she says, "but I think once I get the daily routine down, it won't be such a big deal."

Campbell also has been appointed the trekking leader for a second group of hikers who are arriving in mid-May. She will fly back to Kathmandu to lead in to basecamp the group of trekkers. She also plans to summit some of the nearby mountains, Island Peak (20,000 ft.) and Kala Pattar (18,000 feet).

The expedition plans to return to the U.S. sometime in June. The expedition's website is www.everestcleanup.com.

The expedition's primary sponsor is Inventa -- a leading eBusiness professional services firm that provides business-to-business e-Commerce systems integration and solutions to Global 2000 companies and emerging digital businesses.

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