

Climbers are up to the challenge

Quartet from Delta Community Living Society returns after scaling Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak

BY DAVE WILLIS
dwillis@delta-optimist.com

The Delta Community Living Society officially welcomed home Mark Fugman, Ted O'Brien, Darcy Phillips and Rachel Perigny Monday.

The contingent climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak, last month in a bid to boost awareness about the abilities of people with developmental disabilities and to raise money for the services the society provides.

"Mark, Darcy, Rachel and Ted did a fantastic job," said Anita Sihota, the society's executive director.

The group returned to Canada last week.

Sihota said the team had to work out, watch their diets, go hiking and collect pledges to prepare for the trek up Kilimanjaro.

"Most importantly, they communicated to their friends and families that individuals with developmental disabilities can contribute and be included in all aspects of community life," she said. "That was really what this climb was about."

O'Brien, 47, is supported by the society's Community Living Program. He lives independently in Ladner.

O'Brien said the training helped but it was still a tough climb.

"It was brutal, but I made it," he said. "It was a once



PHOTO BY JULIE IVERSON

Ted O'Brien (left), Darcy Phillips and Mark Fugman returned to Canada last week after taking part in the Climb for Community Living Expedition to Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa.

in a lifetime journey."

Fugman has been with the society since 1983 and is supported through the Family Services Program. The 43-year-old also lives in Ladner.

"I made it to the very top," Fugman said. "And I

was proud I made it to the top."

Phillips and Perigny went on the trip as support climbers.

"I was there chosen to support Mark, and in a number of instances, Mark supported me," Phillips

said, noting she went through elevation sickness.

"I'm really glad that I got the opportunity to go. These guys, they could do anything if they wanted to," she said.

O'Brien, Fugman and Phillips all spoke about

their experience in front of staff and clients at a crowded room at the society's East Ladner location Monday. The audience often gave jubilant rounds of applause while hearing about the quartet's journey.

Perigny was sick and did

not attend.

Over 40 people in total made the trek up Mount Kilimanjaro as part of the Climb for Community Living Expedition. Over 15 community living organizations around B.C. were involved.