

# Effort to help challenged athletes in Africa

## Going for seven

San Clemente woman, Newport Beach couple join forces to deliver equipment.

In a quest to do seven marathons on seven continents while raising money for the Challenged Athletes Foundation,



FRED SWEGLES REGISTER WRITER

partly paralyzed athlete Beth Sanden of San Clemente is going the extra mile to give back.

So are Paul and Denise Fejtek of Newport

Beth Sanden has already participated in marathons on three continents and has plans for races on the other four:

Beach, preparing to lead 20 climbers ascending Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro while raising funds for the foundation.

Sanden and the Fejteks are teaming up to take 14 donated handcycles, racing wheelchairs, tennis wheelchairs and day-use wheel-

chairs to Africa as a gift to challenged athletes who cannot afford them.

In February, Sanden returned from the Kilimanjaro



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### Want to help?

There's no room for more chairs, based on the number of climbers leaving from LAX, the Fejteks said. People who want to help can support the foundation through [cafrica.org](http://cafrica.org), which has details about the trip, the participants and recipients.

On Wednesday, Paul and Denise will depart for Africa with their team of 20 climbers - eight from Orange County - to ascend 19,340-foot Mount Kilimanjaro, a strenuous eight-day journey they say will be filled with spectacular vistas, none as satisfying as delivering the racing wheelchairs to needy athletes. Meanwhile, the group has raised more than \$96,000 for Challenged Athletes Foundation so far.

ro Marathon in Tanzania, pleased to have done the race on her handcycle but sad to have met athletes from Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe who couldn't compete for lack of equipment. One athlete, Eunice, lives with three roommates in a household of four women with physical challenges, Sanden said. They share one hospital-discharge wheelchair. Eunice can walk with arm crutches, Sanden said. The other three cannot.

The Fejteks said they witnessed similar scenes with challenged athletes while in Africa 10 years ago on their first Kilimanjaro climb. Since then, they climbed all of the seven summits, the tallest peaks on all seven continents, including Mount Everest, Earth's highest. They did it

After the Fejteks and Sanden decided to take donated equipment on the plane to Tanzania, emails went out, asking U.S. athletes who receive grants from the foundation if they'd be willing to donate their used equipment. The Fejteks said their living room is full.

Sanden, who trains athletes for the foundation besides raising funds, isn't climbing on the Fejteks' expedition. "They will do their climb while I am in Australia," she said.

This weekend, Sanden departs for Tasmania to do the Ross Marathon on Sept. 2. It will be the fourth of her planned seven marathons. First came the Great Wall of China Marathon, the Kilimanjaro Marathon and the Boston Marathon, all on different continents.

Paul Fejtek said, standing

cluding Mount Everest, Earth's highest. They did it despite Paul's brachial plexus palsy, a birth injury that left him with limited use of his right arm and hand. The Fejteks' adventures and accomplishment inspired Sanden to take on her quest to do seven marathons on seven continents.

"We have tremendous respect for Beth," Paul Fejtek said of Sanden, who was an unimpaired athlete until a 2002 bicycle accident left her with a spinal cord injury - no feeling from the ribcage down. She rallied with physical therapy and hard work. Although one leg remains "pretty much shot," she said, she has done some 50 triathlons and 25 marathons on her handcycle.

Boston Marathon, all on different continents.

Paul Fejtek said standing on the summit of Kilimanjaro with 18 friends 10 years after he and Denise made it the first of their seven summits will be special, but it will be a priceless moment presenting the handcycles and racing chairs, each one's frame signed by the donor with a picture of the donor attached.

"This is so much fun," Sanden said. "This is what it's all about. This is what I hoped and wished and prayed would happen. It's people who needed stuff. This is what a blessing is."

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## The highest mountain on each of the seven continents

