

# THE DURANGO HERALD

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November 6, 2008, Durango Telegraph:

## Climbing for Change - Durango Memorial Reaches Out to Inner-City Kids



A decade-old Durango climbing tragedy is growing into an opportunity for youths who have never seen, let alone summited, peaks.

Ten years ago, La Plata County native Greg Walker succumbed to acute mountain sickness and eventually fell to his death while mountaineering in Mexico. The well-loved, local figure had been attempting to climb Pico de Orizaba, an 18,500-foot volcano outside Mexico City. ...

Ten years later, Walker's loss is continuing to create positive spin-offs. A memorial scholarship is currently being created in Walker's name. The fund's purpose is to share his love of adventure and the outdoors for those who need it most – at-risk students stuck in inner-city environments.

Durango climbers Nelson and Kristy Graves are spearheading the scholarship, and they're doing it with a plan to raise \$18,490 – \$1 for every foot of Orizaba's elevation. In December, they will revisit and summit the peak that claimed their friend's life. The funds will go to Bay Area Wilderness Training and "Climbing for Kids," a nonprofit that gets kids out of inner-cities and into the backcountry.

"This is memorializing Greg Walker," Nelson said. "This is honoring him and his spirit and what he gave us. I know without a doubt that he'd be reaching out to these kids."

November 11, 2008, Durango Telegraph:

## Climber's Legacy - Greg Walker Recalled in Fundraising Effort

Over ten years ago, Greg Walker left Durango to climb Mexico's highest mountain. He didn't come home.

The 24-year old Walker, trailing his climbing partner as they neared the summit of 18,490-foot Pico de Orizaba in late February, 1998, became disoriented and wandered off the established trail. His body was not found until April. Time provided some answers to the questions posed by family and friends: Walker's erratic behavior on the mountain indicated he may have been suffering from altitude sickness, which explains why he may have become disoriented and incapable of returning to camp. When recovered, his body showed signs of trauma consistent with a fall.

But for most who knew him, a decade has not dimmed the memory of his unique spirit in the least. "Greg was special. He bridged every group; he made friends in every circle," said Shane Nelson, who has returned to Durango with a mission inspired by his lost friend. "I don't know quite how to say it, but he was a bright light. And you were better when he was around."

Nelson, a former Outward Bound instructor who currently works with Bay Area Wilderness Training in California, has organized a "Climbing for Kids" fundraising event in Walker's memory. The event will be held on Sunday at Lady Falconburgh's Barley Exchange, where Walker worked as a kitchen manager before his trip to Mexico.