

Meet the Remarkable Lara Daniel

By Penny Randell

Lara Daniel, mountain climber extraordinaire, is currently preparing for her upcoming ascent of Mt. Everest. Her personal training for such is all inclusive, demanding total attention to cardiac stamina, along with intense body strengthening. This is accomplished through self-training, taking on various mountain summits, climbing her way to personal success. The physical part is only half of the challenge, however. An intense mental regimen must be within her grasp at all times. She is forced to consider every possible happening along the way. As she follows her “Uphill Athletes” guide and trainer she is taught footsteps and results. What if she becomes ill? What if the weather won’t forgive? Lara says, “In the end, the main goal is to come back home the same as when I left.”

What is known as the Explorers Grand Slam includes reaching the summit of seven mountains on seven different continents. Beginning with the highest, Everest, she must also tackle Aconcagua in Argentina, Denali in Alaska, Kilimanjaro in Africa, Elbrus in Russia, Vinson in Antarctica, and Puncak-Jaya in Indonesia. In addition, Lara must complete a ski trip to both the North and South Poles. These mountains are the highest peaks found within each country and this unstoppable woman of 48 years has already mounted four. She works out six days a week to insure taking on the others. Once completed, she will be keeping company with a total of 75 Grand Slam winners, which includes only 15 women.

It was 2015 when Lara met her soon-to-be husband Steve while engaging in an adventure sports program. He was, and still is, a devoted mountain climber. Without much effort he convinced her to go on a climb and she fell in love with the challenge. She reports that she is “comfortable being uncomfortable.” Learning all she could about herself resulted in a career of mountain climbing and marrying Steve in the process.

Most climbs demand at the minimum a long weekend and may last up to two weeks. However, the Mt. Everest ascent will call for a two-month commitment. Always aware of the future, Lara spends a typical week with four days of cardiac development, two days to work on overall strength and one day off to rest. Along with her exercises she must practice with climbing gear, constantly improving her skills. Her coach gives knowledge on how to use crampons, ropes, ice axe, cross country skis and more. Steve has remained diligent in teaching rock climbing skills, mountaineering and mindset. Lara says the whole Grand Slam will take three years in total.

It is told that Lara’s upbringing was greatly responsible for her adventurous spirit. She considers it fortunate that her father, who was enlisted in the Army, moved the family about every two to four years. She loved the life, which enabled her to attend high school in Berlin, Germany where she saw the Berlin wall before and after its destruction. In addition, she traveled to many countries such as Nepal, Hungary, Africa, Haiti and more, often engaging in humanitarian efforts. Nepal meant helping with literacy. Africa meant digging an irrigation canal for the Maasai. Her many travels to Haiti had her working in medical clinics.

Today, while keeping the adventures alive, Lara remains actively involved in non-profits. Her mainstay is Denver Pet Partners (DPP), where she somehow finds time to volunteer. DPP is a non-profit organization “dedicated to advancing the Human-Animal bond in order to improve the quality of life, benefit human-animal interaction and enhance animal-assisted intervention.” One can find information about this tower of strength on the DPP website and even donate to her cause. She is passionate over Alaskan Malamutes as she works to raise money for Polaris Alaskan Malamute Rescue (PAMR). Too, Lara has adopted five of these Malamutes so far. Her canine sidekick is named Summit and she tries to keep him along her side on the trail when it’s doable for a dog.

But what’s it like to have a daredevil of a daughter who chases a seemingly impossible dream? Well, Mom worries and is often frightened, yet she accepts her daughter’s goals and intentions. Dad has always supported such and believes the girl will succeed without injury. On the other hand, he was unwavering when it came to education, which saw to Lara’s graduating with a Public Relations Degree with an emphasis on journalism. Lara’s parents were elated over her first climb where she achieved summit on Mt. Shuksan in Washington state. From there they have supported every climb after and remain involved until this very day.

It’s imperative to keep the adrenalin flowing, therefore this ever-onward lady takes on such adventures as sky diving and glider planes. When traveling, she often visits areas of various countries considered unsafe. She is daring and has never let fear stand in her way. While in Hungary she helped to renovate a communist camp that was then able to take on more orphans. She vows to adhere to an agenda that states, “First you decide what it is you want to do; next, figure out the steps to get there; and most of all, just start doing it.”

Steve generally accompanies Lara on her climbs, but will not for Everest. Someone must stay home and attend to the dogs. With Everest on the agenda he believes in his wife 100% and foresees success. His true devotion spurs this woman onward to realization of her dreams. Still, through it all Lara remains committed to her dogs and her involvement with DPP. In fact, one can follow Lara’s Everest climb on the DPP website. In the meantime she trains her dogs, turning misbehavior into compliance with a calming effect. Never stopping, she finds time to maintain a blog and stay active on social media.

As can be imagined, money is an issue. Until this day Lara has not gathered any sponsors. This must be corrected. Considering the climb to Everest summit alone, the amount of money involved is breathtaking. To gain sponsors would be a blessed accomplishment. When speaking with Lara her faith is there for the testing. In the end, it is immeasurable. Her vitality is catching, and explanation of her dreams can be seen in her eyes. This woman is a winner and she hasn’t allowed lack of sponsors to get in her way. Nonetheless, sponsorship is of great importance. If you are so inclined, please visit the DPP website and support Lara, for she has proven herself worthy. Lara Daniel is indeed a star in the making.