

WEDNESDAY

COVER STORY

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Mountain-climbing Janesville native reaches out to others with MS

BY ERIC STEURER
STAFF WRITER

JANESVILLE — Janesville native Lori Schneider made history six months ago. Standing atop Mount Everest, Schneider became the first person in the world with multiple sclerosis to reach the top of the seven summits — the highest peaks on all seven continents.

Today, she uses those climbs as her new way of teaching people about her disease.

“It still seems a bit surreal to me that six months ago I was standing on top of the world,” Schneider said. “I think the whole experience has empowered me to move into a different place in my life.”

“I was once a teacher of children, and now I feel I have lessons that cross over to any age group. My new place in life, I think, is sharing my story and sharing the things that I learned while climbing about believing in yourself.”

Schneider was diagnosed with MS, an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system, on Jan. 4, 1999, a day she said she will remember forever.

“My life was pretty normal and predictable,” Schneider said. “When I heard those two little letters, I went into panic mode.”

Her routine quickly changed, Schneider said, as she left a 20-year teaching career and a 22-year marriage.

“It was difficult when we learned that, but she accepted that very well and therefore her mother and I did too,” said Lori’s father, Neal Schneider. “She had the right attitude.”

Neal was the one who got Lori started on her mountain-climbing journey. The father and daughter climbed

Mount Kilimanjaro together on Neal’s 61st birthday.

“When we went to Africa 16 years ago, I just planned on climbing one mountain at that time,” Neal said. “Lori probably planned the same thing. As it turned out, in 2000 we went to Argentina.”

The duo climbed Mount Aconcagua, a trek Lori said was the biggest climb of her life.

“That climb was a turning point in my whole life,” she said. “I was no longer afraid of my future.”

After that, Lori made history.

In 2002, she climbed Mount Elbrus in Russia; in 2006, she climbed the Denali West Buttress route in Alaska; in 2008, she scaled Mount Kosciuszko in Australia and Vinson Massif in Antarctica; and in 2009, she finished her ascent of Mount Everest.

“Mountain climbing really gave me back my power,” she said.

Her father heard from her through a satellite phone when she reached the top of Everest. He said he knew he’d hear from her, despite the low success rate for climbers reaching the summit of the highest peak in the world. Only about 25 percent of climbers reach the 29,035-foot peak on their first attempt. More than 200 people have died attempting the climb.

“I knew she’d be safe,” Neal said. “I was worried, but I never thought about something happening. I was hoping she would make the mountain.”

Lori said the seven mountains brought seven life lessons and a message she gives back to everyone.

“Live your dreams one step at a time, take a leap of faith, be brave and believe in the inevitable,” she said.

“My message is that those people who are suffering from MS, they’re the

See Climber, page 2



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Lori Schneider poses for a photo with the summit of Mount Everest in the background. Schneider spent two months on the mountain before being the first person in the world with MS to climb the highest mountain on each of the seven continents.

fyi

WEB POLL

Should 9-11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed be tried in a New York City criminal court, rather than by a military tribunal?

Yes 22%
No 78%
(As of noon Monday)

TO VOTE IN OUR WEB POLLS, VISIT:
WWW.COMMUNITYSHOPPERS.COM



PAGE 2

KNOW HER?

She helps match kids with mentors and loves to garden



STURDY

Craftsman makes furniture, cabinets to last a lifetime

PAGE 4

‘QUOTABLE’

“This is game time. If you’re in retail, there are some butterflies. There is some caution. It’s been a very difficult year.”

— Brian Cornell, Sam’s Club

More in the MESSENGER

News digest 2
Business 4
Briefs 5
Calendar 7
Classifieds 9

ad here

IN BRIEF

JANESVILLE

■ Sewer work starting: The city began sewer-rehabilitation work this week. The work will be done in various locations until April. The project is part of an ongoing utility-maintenance program. The contractor is Michels Pipeline Inc. Contractor crews will clean the sewer mains about one week before the rehabilitation work begins. A pipe-lining process will be used to rehabilitate the sections of deteriorated sewer. City residents should be aware that the lining process often generates large amounts of steam, which quickly dissipates and is not harmful. Traffic may be restricted at times to single lanes in each direction. For more information, contact the city's engineering division at (608) 755-3166.

■ Nominees sought for Arts Hall of Fame: The United Arts Alliance of Rock County is seeking nominations for its ninth annual Arts Hall of Fame Brunch to be held March 14 in the Janesville Performing Arts Center. The hall honors individuals who have significantly impacted the arts in the Rock County area. Anyone can nominate a person they believe has made a significant contribution to the growth and well-being of the arts in Rock County. The nominee may be alive or deceased. Nominations must be submitted no later than Jan. 20. Nomination forms are available at the Janesville Performing Arts Center and the Hedberg Public Library.

NEWSMAKER

Lewis Molique Rock Valley Community Programs Inc. selected Lewis Molique, a community representative, for this year's Ken Hendricks Board Member of the Year Award at its 38th annual meeting. Molique has served as a RVCP board member for 15 years and is one of three retiring members. RVCP is a nonprofit agency providing community, correctional, alcohol and drug treatment programs in the greater Rock County area. Also recognized at the event were Charles Nampel, Brad Hawbecker and Erin Turk as employees of the year for their departments. Hawbecker and Leon Leach were recognized for five years of service and Shirley Hatchett was recognized for 15 years of service.

The Messenger is ... People you know

Name: Wendy Aide.
Age: 45, but I still feel like a teenager.
Hometown/residence: Janesville.
Occupation/civic memberships: Volunteer coordinator for Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring programs. I am an active member of the Janesville Home & Garden Club, Friends of Riverside Park Group, member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church and also have been a past member of the Ice Age Trail Coalition, involved in the start-up of Rotary Gardens (volunteering in the gardens' adopt-a-plot program and as a purchaser

for the Gift Shop Committee), member of the Red Cross disaster team and also a past volunteer at the Rock County Humane Society and the Rock County Historical Society.
Family: My adorable husband, Randy, and our sometimes not adorable rescue dog, Laddie.
Favorite food: Homemade dill pickles — especially my brother-in-law Mike's, and my friend Steve's dad's jalapeno dills. My mouth is watering now.
Favorite music: Anything live. Folk, rock, blues, country, classical, jazz.
Favorite movies: Anything

with Jack Nicholson in it.
Favorite books: Inspirational books, gardening books, biographies and history.
Favorite vacation place: My cottage, the Apostle Islands and Lake Superior.
In my spare time I: Try to be with friends and my family.
I think the most important issue in the Janesville area is: Keeping our green spaces green, and protecting and utilizing our beautiful Rock River.
If I could change one thing: I would have traveled more.
Peak experience: Marrying my best friend, Randy.
Pit experience: Losing my dear, loving grandma, Helen.
If I could sit down to supper with anyone, living, dead or fictional? I would love nothing more than to be surrounded by my friends and family.
Most people don't know I: Was the Mount Pleasant Cemetery



WENDY AIDE
caretaker for five years.
I can't stand: To see anyone suffer.
I wish I knew how to: Play the guitar.
Motto, inspiration or favorite quote: Make every minute matter.

CLIMBER

Continued from page 1

ones that inspired me and gave me the hope and courage and strength to push beyond my limits and try harder, because so many people struggle to walk just across the room with MS. They were such an inspiration to me. I think that the message is universal and that we should all try to live our dreams."

While Schneider is not affected by MS as much as some people, the disease still plays a major role in her life.

"Sometimes I get some tingling in my left hand," she said. "But generally, I don't experience many symptoms for a long period of time, and then unexpectedly things will pop up. It's very typical with MS — it just comes and goes."

"Every case is really different. I'm one of the very lucky ones. Most people with MS experience symptoms more often than I do. Mine is pretty stable right now."

Schneider, who now lives in Bayfield in northern Wisconsin, founded Empowerment Through Adventure, a project that allows her to give presentations about her journey. She also intends to give other people who suffer from MS a chance to experience similar triumphs first-hand.

She is planning to take a group of people with MS on a yearly trip to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. The first trip is planned for the summer of 2011. She also has been invited to speak in Europe.

"I'm creating activities and



PHOTO SUBMITTED
Janesville native Lori Schneider holds a banner celebrating World MS Day while atop Mount Everest. She was asked to take the flag to the mountaintop in celebration of the day.

adventures for people with MS to help them step outside of the box temporarily and experience some things that they might not necessarily try," she said.

The Wisconsin chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society is impressed with her efforts.

"Lori Schneider is proof we should never lose sight of our dreams," said Mary Hartwig, director of development and marketing communications for the chapter. "Her message is one of hope and inspiration ... and belief that one day we will see a world free of MS."

Schneider said her journey is her way of showing people they need something to strive for.

"I'm just a person who was trying to live a dream," she said. "It is not the mountain that we conquer, but ourselves."

The Seven Summits

Lori Schneider's history-making journeys:

- **1993:** Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, Africa, 19,340 feet, six days.
- **2000:** Mount Aconcagua, South America, 22,841 feet, three weeks.
- **2002:** Mount Elbrus, Russia, 18,540 feet, two weeks.
- **2006:** Denali West Buttress route, Alaska, 20,320 feet, three weeks.
- **2008:** Mount Kosciuszko, New South Wales, Australia, 7,310 feet, two days.
- **2008:** Vinson Massif, Antarctica, 16,067 feet, three weeks.
- **2009:** Mount Everest, Nepal, 29,035 feet, two months.

ABOUT MS

■ Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, with more than twice as many women as men contracting the disease. MS affects more than 400,000 people in the U.S. and 2.5 million worldwide. Contact the National Multiple Sclerosis Society-Wisconsin Chapter online at www.nationalmssociety.org/chapters/WIG/index.aspx

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