

**Beverly High graduate
Gottfurcht is first rheumatoid
arthritis patient to conquer
Mount Everest**

After enduring a 10-hour climb in 70 mile-per-hour winds from the final staging area on Mount Everest, 1991 Beverly High graduate Jeffrey Gottfurcht became the first rheumatoid arthritis patient to reach the summit on May 14.

Though it had taken Gottfurcht weeks to reach the peak at 29,000 feet, he and his guide, Sherpa Danuru, spent only a few minutes at the summit. Gottfurcht had temporarily lost vision in his left eye due to the freezing, windy conditions. Gottfurcht could not risk losing vision in his right eye, since he still had a 3,000-foot climb back down to camp, which ended up taking 15 hours.

"As I got to the top, I had surrendered to my fate," Gottfurcht said. "I didn't know if I was going to die; I didn't know if I was going to make it to the top. The point is I surrendered to what was going to happen, which enabled me to climb freely."

Gottfurcht may not have anticipated temporary loss of vision, but he expected significant challenges during the climb due to his RA, which he said affects his knees, hips and wrists the most. He managed his joint pain with over-the-counter medication Nyloxin, which sponsored Gottfurcht's climb.

"In order for me to offset having RA and what that does to my knees, I had to train especially [hard at] something that I could control, [which was] my lungs and my heart," Gottfurcht said. "Obviously when you're climbing at those altitudes, while your legs are important, what's equally important is your ability to pump blood with less oxygen."

Gottfurcht found he was able to do that very well. In addition, he said he was grateful his RA did not flare up during the expedition. That was not the case in 2010, when Gottfurcht made his first attempt at climbing Mount Everest. At Camp 2, Gottfurcht was about 8,000 feet below the summit when he decided to turn back.

"My wife and I had made a pact that if I didn't feel good that I could go back a second time," Gottfurcht said. "I knew when I was up on Everest I wasn't feeling good. If I had kept going I probably would have met my demise. I prudently made the decision. It was one of the hardest decisions I've ever made in my life, but you don't want to expend your strength prematurely on something that's not yet ripe."

Gottfurcht said it took him seven years of training to achieve his goal. When he was first diagnosed with RA at age 28, he said it was debilitating as well as difficult for him to accept because he had been an active surfer, hiker and climber since childhood. Gottfurcht said it was the birth of his first child that inspired him to go for his dream of climbing Mount Everest, because he wanted to motivate his children to set lofty goals.

Though Gottfurcht lives with his wife and three children in San Francisco, where he trains, he said he is in Beverly Hills three times a week at The Jeffrey Gottfurcht Children's Arthritis Foundation, which he founded two years ago with encouragement from his father John Gottfurcht. The foundation is devoted to enriching the lives of children with arthritis by introducing them to a hero, sending them to college, or simply giving them the latest iPod or gaming system.

"A lot of people didn't think I could have it at 28, but there are kids that have it," Gottfurcht said. "[We thought,] let's make a foundation that makes dreams and wishes come true for kids living with juvenile arthritis."

Three of Gottfurcht's Beverly High classmates sit on the foundation's Dream Board, a group of influential physicians, celebrities and corporate executives that help create new opportunities for the foundation.

"[Climbing Mount Everest] was one of the greatest experiences of my life, something I hope all people with RA will look at," Gottfurcht said. "Everyone has their Everest. It doesn't have to be literal."

Gottfurcht has set a new goal, to climb the highest peak on each continent. His next climb, Aconcagua, a 22,841-foot peak in the Andes Mountains in Argentina, is scheduled for January, and he scaled Mount Elbrus, 18,510 feet, in Russia prior to climbing Everest.

"I have to have climbing in my life because that's what actually gets me out of bed, to go training," Gottfurcht said. "If not, the RA does its wonders on me. Hiking and climbing is really my drug; it gives me motivation. I think a life without goals is a meaningless life."



Jeffrey Gottfurcht (right) and his guide Sherpa Danuru scale Geneva Spur on Mount Everest at 26,000 feet

board holds on to the progress the district has made.

"We have to always be vigilant to not give back territory [we have] fought hard to gain," Korbatov said. "We've got to hold the line with expenditures and transparency and accountability. I think we have to continue to

foster a good relationship with our teachers and our administrators."

Korbatov said she was looking forward to the Board getting a fresh start with two new members, Lewis Hall and Noah Margo.

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Metro Briefs

WESTSIDE/CENTRAL

Where's My Bus? Check Your Cell Phone

Get real-time bus arrival information on your cell phone with Metro's new Nextrip. Using satellite technology, Nextrip pinpoints your bus and tells you how soon it will arrive at your stop. Access Nextrip from either text/SMS, mobile web, voice or online. For complete details and options, visit metro.net/nextrip.

Metro Receives Clean Air Award

The South Coast Air Quality Management District's (AQMD) Clean Air Award has been presented to Metro in the category of "Promotion of Good Environmental Stewardship." The award went to Metro for its achievement in being the first major transit agency in the nation with a fleet run entirely on alternative fuels.

Find Out The Latest On Expo Phase 2

The Expo Construction Authority is holding design update community meetings in West LA and Santa Monica this month on Phase 2 of the project extending the LA to Culver City Expo Line farther west to Santa Monica. Log on to BuildExpo.org for dates, times and locations of the meetings.

Santa Monica Bike Centers To Open

The City of Santa Monica is poised to officially open two brand new bike centers providing secure bicycle parking, lockers, showers, bike rentals, tours and repair services. They are located in the parking structure of Santa Monica Place, at 2nd Street and Colorado Avenue, and at 4th Street and Broadway.

Sunset Bridge Construction Underway

Approaches to the Sunset Boulevard Bridge over the I-405 Freeway are currently being reconstructed as part of the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Improvements Project. This will be followed by demolition of the northern half of the bridge with reconstruction lasting approximately 12 months. For details, as well as project updates, go to metro.net/405.



If you'd like to know more, visit metro.net.

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