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Life in the outdoors

Man who helped start CW HOG is part of group's anniversary event

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Tom Whittaker's excited about the prospect of returning to Pocatello, especially since he'll be helping to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Idaho State University's Cooperative Wilderness Handicapped Outdoor Group, a group he helped start.

"I had no idea when I started the program it would still be going strong today," said Whittaker, via telephone from Prescott, Ariz.

Whittaker came to ISU's Outdoor Adventure Center during the 1970s. He says he came in thinking he "knew it all," but found very quickly he had come to a place where they were doing things a bit differently, "and I was on the bottom rung."

That experience, he said, helped to humble him to some degree, but not enough to keep him from eventually moving on. In 1979, Whittaker left the Gate City for new job in Sun Valley, only to have his life turned upside down.

A car drifted into his lane, hitting his car.

"I was quickly back in Pocatello with multiple fractures and my foot in a bag," Whittaker said.

He had lost his right foot and kneecap as a result of the accident. For someone



Tom Whittaker, who helped start CW HOG in Pocatello, rests on the Khumbu glacier after his successful bid to reach Mount Everest's 29,035 foot summit on May 27, 1998. CW HOG, which provides outdoor recreational opportunities for those with disabilities, plans its annual Pig Out fundraiser Saturday at the Lower Ross Park pavilion in Pocatello starting about 4 p.m. Whittaker also plans to speak Friday starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Stephens Performing Arts Center here to raise money for the planned all-access Brooklyn's Playground in Pocatello.

with so much to lust for the outdoors, it could have been devastating.

But, Whittaker, with the help of several friends, physical therapists and a local blacksmith who made him a titanium prosthetic, was back on his feet in no time. It was also with the help of some of those friends that Whittaker founded the CW Hog program in 1981 with the purpose of providing rec-

reational opportunities for people with all levels of abilities.

CW Hog will be hosting its annual Pig Out, its largest fundraiser of the year, on Saturday at the pavilion in Lower Ross Park. But the 30th anniversary celebration gets started on Friday with Whittaker speaking at an event that will also raise funds for Brooklyn's Playground. Playground construction starts Monday.

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"A Summit Celebration," will be hosted at the L.E. & Thelma E. Stephens Performing Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$12 per person. The doors open at 7 p.m. and the event will also include a performance from the ISU Children's Chorus.

Among the topics Whittaker will speak about his ascension to the summit of Mount Everest. He's the first climber with a disability to reach that pinnacle.

But Whittaker's talk will also include other aspects of his life in what he says is a fun night.

"I am an extemporaneous speaker. I fly by the seat of my pants," he said. "The whole thing should really be fun."

Bob Ellis, coordinator of ISU's Outdoor Adventure Center, called Whittaker's appearance, "a treat."

Ellis said there are also tickets still available for Saturday's Pig Out, which gets started at about 4 p.m. Cost to attend that event is \$12 for adults and \$5 for kids 6 to 11 years old. Proceeds from the Pig Out go toward the costs associated with several summer and winter activities that CW Hog plans, including its adaptive snow skiing program and whitewater rafting trips.

Ellis said the group will start serving food at about 4 p.m. and the music will run from about 5:30 p.m. to roughly 10:30 p.m.