

## KILIMANJARO PORTER ASSISTANCE PROJECT

*HEC porter assistance expanded to Africa and South America.* On September 17, as the many climbers waited in their tents for a late season storm to pass, three porters on Mt. Kilimanjaro were not so lucky. These three porters, lacking proper clothing, were believed to have died of hypothermia. African porters on Mt. Kilimanjaro carry over 25 kilos (55 pounds) of their clients' food and gear to the high camps of the mountain, getting paid less than US\$6 per day. These porters can't afford to buy the top gear that a climber brings when they climb the mountain; the porter may be wearing only cotton pants and a light jacket. Last December the non-profit Himalayan Explorers Connection established the Kilimanjaro Porter Assistance Project, modeled after the Nepal Porter Assistance Project (AAJ 2002, pg. 400). The HEC collects donated clothing and gear from individuals and companies such as Nike ACG, REI, Mountain Hardware, Lowe Alpine, Montrail, Patagonia, The North Face, Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort, Outdoor Research, and Thorlos. This gear is sent to the HEC offices at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro for a clothing-lending program for porters. The offices also provide education to porters in subjects such as English, first aid, and AIDS awareness.

Back in the United States, another project is underway to work with tourists and tour operators to develop Porter Treatment Guidelines; this was in response to a recent survey of the top U.S. tour operators. The survey revealed that 90% of tour operators do not have a policy for porter treatment. This innovative program lends clothing to porters, thus allowing them to be adequately equipped for their work on the world's highest mountains. By also educating visitors traveling to Kilimanjaro, it will make sure porters are properly cared for and outfitted. The KPAP office is located at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Moshi, Tanzania. The office is open to porters, tour operators, and climbers to come in for clothing, classes, and tourist education about porter treatment.

Currently, there are Porter Assistance Project offices in Nepal, Kilimanjaro, and opening in 2003 with partners Porteadores Inka Ñan an office in Peru. For more information about volunteering, donating equipment, or to help delivering a bag to Kilimanjaro, please contact the Himalayan Explorers Connection at [info@hec.org](mailto:info@hec.org) or visit the web site at [www.hec.org](http://www.hec.org).

KEN STOBER, *Director of International Operations, Himalayan Explorers Connection*

## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MOUNTAINS

*What did it mean? What did it do?* To most of us who read this journal, every year is a year of mountains. So you could be forgiven for thinking that the United Nations' declaration of 2002 as International Year of Mountains was, at best, a yawn and, at worst, an excuse for government-sponsored junkets to alpine resorts. Not so.

International Year of Mountains (IYM) was intended to focus worldwide attention on the value and the vulnerability of the world's mountain regions. I believe it accomplished that goal. Thousands of IYM events around the globe reached literally millions of people with messages about the importance of preserving mountain ecosystems and the value of mountain cultures. In hundreds of mountain communities, people took action to address these issues.

Mountains as a theme first made it onto the worldwide environmental radar screen at