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Carroll teacher and friends reach peak of Kilimanjaro

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Carroll school district teacher Kathy Loewen and three friends from a Grapevine running club reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania on Saturday. After returning home, she will share her experiences with her students.

Who went on the trip?

Loewen, of Grapevine, Rick Fogle of Colleyville, Cindy Lee of Southlake and Jim Rubalcaba of Lewisville. They're members of the Lake Grapevine Runners and Walkers, a club that meets on Saturday mornings. Part of the training for the climb involved long hikes at the Northshore Trail along Lake Grapevine. The trip was arranged through the Tanzanian company Summit Expeditions and Nomadic Experience.

About Mount Kilimanjaro

The group climbed to the top of Africa's tallest mountain, reaching the 19,340-foot summit on Saturday. The mountain is in northeastern Tanzania, a country of 37 million people in eastern Africa.

What the students are learning

Loewen's satellite phone hasn't worked well, so the hikers sent brief e-mail updates by laptop that were read to students. She used global-positioning technology to give the group's longitude and latitude throughout the trip. Those coordinates were used to track the progress of the expedition on a map at Eubanks Intermediate School. Last week, Loewen wrote that she carried a 25-pound pack and that porters for the mountaineers cooked meals with local fruits and vegetables. Here are some excerpts from Loewen's e-mails:

Jan. 27: "Hiked in rain forest and looking for monkeys, but they must have been sleeping."

Jan 28: "Low on batteries. Tried to use solar batteries. The hike was through tropical forest, very muddy and steep."

Jan. 31: "Landscape is beautiful, some cactus, low bushes and lots of rocks. ... Our last email was sent using a nine-volt battery and duct tape holding a knife as a conductor."

What's next?

Loewen called a friend Monday as the hikers rode to the village of Marangu Mbahe, the trek leader's hometown. They were scheduled to have a hot shower and dinner at a farmhouse. Today they were to shop before leaving Kilimanjaro Airport, and they are scheduled to arrive in Texas on Wednesday.

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