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Lake Orion Man to Climb Mountain for Lighthouse of Oakland County

Mike Balian will climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in late February; raise funds for Lighthouse

Pontiac, Mich. — Attorney Mike Balian has always been a bit of an adventurer – a skier, skydiver and a licensed pilot. But his most recent endeavor is perhaps his greatest challenge, and is being used to help those in need.

Balian, a Lake Orion resident and managing partner of Balian & Busse in Rochester Hills, will be climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania as part of a small, guided group from February 20-27. The 50-year-old began an active campaign to get in better physical shape about a year ago, and now that he is in the “best shape since high school,” he decided to put his conditioning to the test.

“I did it because I have younger kids (ranging from ages 4-14), and I wanted them to realize that it doesn’t matter how old you are – you can accomplish whatever you set your mind to,” Balian says. “But it will also benefit me physically, mentally and spiritually.”

Once he began to research the climb, he was encouraged by friends and family to turn it into a fundraiser so that those in need may also benefit. Balian wanted to support an Oakland County-based organization that helps people within county borders, and his research revealed that Lighthouse was the best fit.

“I am a Michigan guy and an Oakland County guy, and I wanted to work with a charity that could benefit my neighbors and those I live with and work around,” Balian said. “Lighthouse does a great job meeting the needs of single mothers and their children, families who are trying to save their homes from foreclosure or afford the independence of owning a new home, and all those trying to get back on their feet.”

Lighthouse President and CEO John Ziraldo says that Balian’s efforts are truly appreciated. “It says a lot about him as a person that he wants to make this type of statement for his children and his community,” Ziraldo said. “We really appreciate Mike’s efforts and all who support the cause of helping those in need within Southeast Michigan to become more self-sufficient.”

The Mt. Kilimanjaro climb will include five days of going up and three days coming down. He and his fellow hikers will be camping out each night. While it is not a “technical” climb because he won’t be scaling the sides of cliffs, it is a grueling physical challenge. Only 30 percent of those who set out to reach the summit actually make it there.

Balian hopes to raise at least \$5,000 from friends, family members, and anyone interested in supporting Lighthouse. Donations can be sent to Balian LOC Fundraiser, c/o Lighthouse of Oakland County, PO Box 430508, Pontiac, MI 48343-0508. Visit www.LighthouseOakland.org for more information. A Facebook page has also been set up for Balian’s climb at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/258361084229242/>.



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Lighthouse of Oakland County, Inc. (LOC) has been providing services to low-income families in the area since 1972. It is a family of agencies providing a full range of services designed to move people from crisis and instability to self-sufficiency.

Lighthouse last year provided assistance to families and individuals in need on 62,000 separate occasions through three key subsidiaries: Lighthouse Community Development (LCD), which rejuvenates communities through affordable housing and educated homeowners; Lighthouse Emergency Services (LES), which provides emergency food, housing, medical, utility and other services to people who need immediate help; and Lighthouse PATH (PATH), which provides long-term housing and support to help women with children achieve self-sufficiency and a healthy family environment.