

Kingston climber reaches new heights

By Emma Taylor Posted 4 months ago (Sept 2009)



When motivational speakers talk about conquering mountains, they don't mean literally.

Unless you're Leslie Timms and giving the talk.

The 25-year-old Kingstonian, who lives near Collingwood, is doing just that and gaining attention for her efforts. She's made the front cover of a climbing magazine recently, and is quickly ticking off a number of high-profile rock

faces as Mission: accomplished.

Timms became involved in environmental studies at Bayridge Secondary School in the Environmental Leadership program. The subject intrigued her so much that she went on to take the Outdoor Adventure Programming Diploma at Algonquin College. While she was there she met her husband, Kyle Thomas, 30.

Timms first tried her hand at rock climbing while she was in the Environmental Leadership program but it didn't sink its hooks into her at that point. In November 2003, a group of college friends took her to a climbing boulder in Pembroke.

Her friends were all climbers and they lent her shoes and chalk. She was instantly hooked and climbed until her fingers bled; she ended up buying her own gear that weekend.

She said she fell in love with the personal challenge and the way her body moved across the rock.

"Climbing is an amazing personal challenge in all aspects," she explains. "It pushes my body to limits I never deemed possible before. It also forces me to find balance, confidence and calmness within my mind. It has taught me to believe in myself and always forces me to face fears."

Timms is taking time to find her place in real life right now, but said when she isn't climbing she is either thinking about climbing or training for climbing. This summer she will be guiding some trips for Free Spirit Tours near Collingwood. She is also running a women's climbing clinic in August called She Climbs, also through Free Spirit Tours.

"I am in the midst of getting my personal training certification this summer. I get a lot of fulfillment from helping others achieve balance in their lives."

Climbing adventures have taken her far and wide across the U.S., Mexico and Eastern Canada. But her most memorable experience was her time spent in Joshua Tree, California.

"It is a really majestic place with a lot of history; it almost feels like you are on another planet. There are so many traditions, secret places and little mystical adventures; it's like an adult playground."

She said she will remember many of those climbs for the rest of her life because she had to put her heart, soul and every bit of guts she had to accomplish them.

Climbing has also made her somewhat of a celebrity. She was contacted by Gripped magazine about doing an article in the northern faces column. A photographer came out to shoot her climbing in Utah. The shot made the cover.

"It was a really fun experience, he was super relaxed and just let me do my thing."

Injuries have been the hardest challenge for Timms. In five and one-half years, she has suffered two major injuries and several minor ones that have put her out of climbing for periods from four weeks to eight months.

"It is really hard to stay positive when you are battling with frustrating injuries. Another challenge for me has been dealing with pressure."

She said she puts a lot of pressure on herself to perform so she tries to always remember to just have fun. She tells herself that once she sorts out her fear she will climb much better.

Timms has some words of advice for new climbers.

"Don't give up. Climbing can be very frustrating at first, so just be patient and it will come together. Keep learning and watch other climbers and how they move on the rock."

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