

News



Peter Turkstra sets up his tent on the Arctic ice

Closing in on Santa's shop

Trekkers 10km from North Pole

By Daniel Nolan
The Hamilton Spectator
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A team of Hamilton adventurers is within hours of reaching the North Pole.

The group said it was within 10 kilometres of the geographic North Pole. And leader Doug Stoup was promising them a visit to Santa's workshop as they prepared for the last dash across the polar ice in the morning.

"We are hoping by noon we are going to reach the Pole," said Ted Wilkes, an American who is accompanying the five-member team from Hamilton and Burlington. "We'll be at the North Pole ... with any luck."

Wilkes was speaking last night to The Spectator via a satellite phone at what he called Camp 7. It is on an ice pack somewhere in the Arctic Ocean.

The team, which set out for the North Pole April 11, includes Paul Hubner, of Stoney Creek-based Baffin Inc.; Turkstra Lumber president Peter Turkstra; Losani Homes CEO Fred Losani; Branthaven Homes owner Steve Stipsits, and Scott Shawyer, CEO of an engineering company. They are aiming to raise \$500,000 to combat child poverty in Hamilton.

Wilkes said the team, which is being led by American extreme adventurer Doug Stoup, had a good day covering ground yesterday. He said they skied about 21 kilometres through -17 C conditions.

"We had a great day," he said. "It was a warm and sunny day. It was a beautiful day on the Arctic Ocean."

Wilkes said the team did encounter some open water during their trek, but it did not turn out to be too big of an obstacle.

"We were able to manoeuvre through (it)," he said. "There was a lot of deep snow within the ice and rubble."

"Overall, it was an excellent skiing day."

Wilkes praised the leadership of Stoup, who is using the trek as a kind of classroom at the top of the world. Children in 101 Hamilton classrooms are following the journey and are studying right along with him. Students are in touch with Stoup through thespec.com.

"He's really been an inspirational leader," Wilkes said.

"It's just awesome and his love of the Arctic is just really infectious. First and foremost, he has kept us safe, although he fell in today. But he was OK. It wasn't a big deal."

He joked that the "best thing" is that Stoup told them that he knows



At Longyearbyen City Center with statue of Longyear



Checking out their tents and gear



Walking into town (Longyearbyen)

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where Santa's workshop is and "there's a good possibility he's going to show it to us."

The team began their 100-kilometre journey on a shifting pack of ice in the Siberian Arctic known as ice-station Borneo. They are pulling sledges packed with more than 45 kilograms of gear and supplies.

The trip was the idea of Hubner, who produces boots that have been worn in treks to the South Pole and Mount Everest. Seven years ago, he was promoting his boots at a Utah trade show and met Stoup. A friendship quickly developed.

Most of the funds raised from the adventure will go to nutrition and music programs in central Hamilton schools. The rest will go to food banks, shelters and other poverty-related programs.

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