



1st American Woman to summit K2 brings Red Cross along

August 21, 2017

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Not many people would consider running a marathon as a training activity, but Vanessa O'Brien is not your ordinary athlete.

Perhaps world adventurer or explorer would be a more apt description of Vanessa. In July this year, Vanessa became the first American woman to summit K2 in Pakistan.

Vanessa ties to the Red Cross began years ago and she is no stranger to the American Red Cross of Massachusetts. At the region's annual meeting in July 2015, Vanessa gave a stirring mission-moment about the good she has seen firsthand performed by the Red Cross around the globe. It was on that day in 2015 she told a packed room in Cambridge she intended to bring a Red Cross flag to summit of K2.

Her numerous accomplishment have been documented internationally in newspapers and the record books:

- First American and British woman to successfully summit K2, the second tallest peak in the world at 8,611m.
- Guinness World Record holder for being the first woman to set a speed record to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peak on every continent, in 295 days.
- First woman to set a speed record to complete the Explorers Grand Slam (Seven Summits plus skiing the last degree to the North and South Poles) in 11 months, and one of only nine women to do so in the world.
- Summited four of the fourteen 8,000 meter peaks or peaks over 26,000 feet, including Everest.
- Summited two 8,000 meter peaks back-to-back with summits eight days apart (Shishapangma and Cho Oyu).

More recently, Vanessa was chosen to be a part of Team Red Cross for the 121st running of the Boston Marathon. Vanessa and 62 other runners were selected because of their passion for their fellow citizens. Team Red Cross runners help to save and transform the lives of people in their greatest time of need through the donations they raise during their training. Individually, Vanessa made an enormous contribution to the team, making it a record-setting year for Team Red Cross with more than \$500,000 in donations.

"I have never run a Marathon before, and while I wouldn't think twice about climbing five miles high, 26.2 miles long seems like something I would never be ready to do," Vanessa said. "But then I remembered - the American Red Cross doesn't have that luxury. They have to be ready 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year."

We congratulate Vanessa on this monumental achievement and thank her for all the ambassador work she does for the Red Cross around the world.