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For More Information

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Photos available upon request

**FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN TO REACH THE NORTH POLE AT AGE 75
SETS SIGHTS ON SOUTH POLE AT AGE 77**

(New York City) June 24, 2008—Most people look forward to a quiet retirement when their working days are done, but not 76-year-old Barbara Hillary. In 2007, the retired nurse, community activist and lung cancer survivor became the first Black woman on record and one of the oldest people to reach the North Pole—the literal top of the world. Not one to slow down, the New York native is training and raising funds for a trip to the South Pole! It is believed that she will be the first Black woman to reach both Poles and one of the oldest persons to make that trip as well.

“When I returned from the North Pole, I received all kinds of letters from people of all ages and backgrounds who were inspired by my quest. That helped me to understand what my personal achievement means in a broader sense,” says Hillary. “I was raised in Harlem and from an early age I learned that anybody can reach their individual goals. My trips to the poles are symbols for everyone’s personal goals. My quest transcends race, gender and age for all of humanity.”

Hillary fell in love with the arctic environment in 2005, after taking a trip to Manitoba, Canada, to photograph polar bears. The trip led to dog sledding and snow mobiling lessons and voracious reading about arctic exploring. As Hillary read about all the men and women who braved challenges to reach the North Pole, she noted that no Black woman had accomplished this feat. So she set out to change the history books. Without a heavy bankroll, no training on skis and average physical fitness, Hillary faced a daunting challenge.

“The process of preparing to go to the North Pole was a heaven and a hell,” Hillary says. “I didn’t have any money—not two nickels to rub together—and the base cost of the trip was \$23,000. I was trying to raise money, trying to train and learning to absorb rejections. People told me I was too old, that I was going to die there, get eaten by polar bears. But, I don’t allow negative people in my life.”

On April 23, 2007, barely six months after hatching her plan, Hillary stood at the North Pole, having raised most of the funding for the trip, learned to ski, completed rigorous physical training. She dedicated the moment to her mother. She firmly believes that she couldn’t have accomplished this feat without the positive foundation and underpinnings that she received from her mother.

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Now, Hillary has another goal—to make it to the South Pole.

The majority of the people who have made travel to the frozen tundra have been men who have been celebrated worldwide. Coincidentally, one of them was Sir Edmund Hillary who died earlier this year. Barbara Hillary says “there must be some toughness in the Hillary name.”

As she did for the North Pole trip, Barbara Hillary is preparing her body for rigorous physical exertion. She’s even pulling a tire tied to a waist harness up and down the street of her Queens, New York neighborhood to build strength. She will need to be in top shape to brave average lows of -78F, with wind chills of -118F.

Hillary is focused on raising her visibility and funds (more than \$50,000) to make her dream a reality. One handicap that women who want to explore the polar region continue to suffer is their difficulty in attracting funding for such ventures. And, of course, there are still those who say a 78-year-old woman has no business planning a trek to the South Pole.

“This adventure is not just about me,” Hillary says. “It’s about expanding the human capacity.” And judging from the hits to her website, from as far as Norway and Malaysia, her mission is spreading around the world.

“Why do I want to go to the South Pole? I want to do it to challenge myself on a higher level. It’s the thrill of personal accomplishment,” Hillary says. “But you know what? I also want to reach the South Pole for all those people who said I couldn’t make it to the North Pole. Not only did I make it to the top of the world, but I’m going to make it to the South Pole, too.”

Learn more about Barbara Hillary and support her South Pole trip at www.barbarahillary.com.

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