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Two Blind Kayakers Attempt the Grand Canyon

In September, Erik Weihenmayer, best known as the only blind adventurer to climb Mt. Everest, will tackle another historic challenge, solo kayaking the Grand Canyon, 277 miles from Lee's Ferry to Pierce Ferry. Joining him will be blinded Navy veteran and accomplished kayaker Lonnie Bedwell. Together, the two hope to make a powerful and authentic statement about living a No Barriers Life and the belief that this is possible for each of us. The expedition is hosted by No Barriers USA, a nonprofit organization that empowers people with the message, "what's within you is stronger than what's in your way."

Weihenmayer has been blazing his own trail since he lost his sight at age 14. He represented Connecticut in the National Wrestling Championships, climbed Mt. Everest and the Seven Summits in a 7-year span, scaled the overhanging granite face of El Capitan and the 2800-foot ice face of Losar in the Himalayas, finished the Leadville 100 Mountain Bike Race at elevations above 10,000 feet, and completed Primal Quest, billed as one of the toughest adventure races in the world - 460 miles - 60,000 feet of elevation gain - no time outs. Additionally, he is a certified solo skydiver and para-glider and teaches his own downhill skiing technique called Blind Skiers Edge to groups around the country. In ABC's summer TV series, Expedition Impossible, Weihenmayer competed on a 3-man team in a race across the mountains, rivers and deserts of Morocco, finishing 2nd and beating twelve teams of able-bodied athletes.

Lonnie Bedwell, a former Navy Petty Officer, was injured in a hunting accident which took his sight instantly. After raising his family, 13 years later, he got into adaptive sports, becoming the first visually impaired kayaker to complete the 225-mile stretch of the Grand Canyon, with a team of military veterans. He has decided to join Erik's expedition to make a statement to the world about the importance of supporting our veterans on their journey home.

Weihenmayer is one of the early founders of No Barriers USA which helps people to tap into the human spirit, break through their own barriers and live a life of purpose. Through programming for youth, veterans, people with disabilities, and families, No Barriers provides tools and experiences which foster a community of curious, brave, and innovative explorers who want more out of life. Weihenmayer and Bedwell will use the platform of this adventure to reach an ambitious goal – to encourage one-million people to pledge to live a No Barriers Life by going to www.nobarrierspledge.org.

With solid rock walls carved a mile deep by the mighty Colorado River, the Grand Canyon is one of the great natural wonders on Earth with a fearsome reputation as one of the most daunting whitewater venues in the world. Weihenmayer and Bedwell have spent the last several years training and developing innovative systems for kayaking rapids with the help of high-tech radios and verbal commands from experienced guides. Despite many past successes, Weihenmayer says, "Kayaking hands-down is the hardest and scariest thing I've ever done. However, this project isn't just about the adrenaline; it's about everyone's journey to live a No Barriers Life, to use our internal tool kit to harness our challenges and live the best versions of ourselves."

The expedition begins September 7, 2014 and is expected to take 21 days. The plan is to distribute daily updates, including photos, from the Canyon.

To see a short 3-minute video teaser:

<https://vimeo.com/71324098>

Password: erik

For more information on the No-Barriers Grand Canyon project, contact Ed Weihenmayer at ed@touchthetop.com or 904/321-1938.

To learn more about No Barriers USA, go to www.nobarriersusa.org.



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