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Mountaineer aims to halt child trafficking

By *ELLE WATSON*

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On his journey to climb Mount Everest three years ago Gavin Vickers saw the reality of child trafficking in Nepal.



FUND-RAISER: Gavin Vickers at the summit of Mount Everest. The experienced mountaineer is raising money to help the people of Nepal and to put a halt to child trafficking.

The Thornton climber has since become patron of the Australian branch of The Umbrella Foundation – a registered charity working to alleviate the impact of poverty and war in Nepal and stop child trafficking.

“I went to Nepal and fell in love with the people and I’ve been back six times,” said Mr Vickers, who will attempt to climb the 12th highest mountain in the world, Broad Peak, next month.

“The people are absolutely lovely, but they struggle.

“There’s no security net in Nepal, kids get trafficked if their parents can’t afford to feed them.

“This organisation provides them with housing and hopefully integrates them back into the village.”

On Saturday he will speak about his major climbs and interaction with the Nepalese people during a fund-raiser for the foundation.

Head of the Australian branch of the foundation and also from Thornton, Linda Harwood, said 380 children have been rescued since its beginning.

She said poverty stricken parents are threatened with death and forced to hand over guardianship of their children, who are taken into group homes.

These illegal homes or orphanages take donations from unknowing Westerners.

“Parents don’t have a choice, their lives are threatened and they can’t afford to keep their children,” Ms Harwood said.

The charity rescues these children, educates them, and if they can, re-integrates them back into their communities.

The Nepalese banquet dinner and talk from Mr Vickers will take place at MoMo Wholefood Cafe in East Maitland on Saturday, May 10.

Tickets can be bought at the door or visit the Umbrella Foundation’s Facebook page.

Money raised will go directly to the foundation and to Father Chris Riley’s Youth of the Streets Program.