

Lhakpa Sherpa of West Hartford

Queen of Everest

In many ways, Lhakpa Sherpa of West Hartford is like a lot of other 45-year-old women.

The single mother of three – a survivor of domestic abuse – works long hours as a dishwasher at Whole Foods while juggling the demands of a busy life at home. She also has a “side hustle:” her own guided-expedition company called Cloudscape Climbing, which offers local hikes in New England as well as expeditions in the Himalayas.

But there’s one way in which Lhakpa is like no one else: Internationally known as the “Queen of Everest,” she has climbed the 29,035 feet to the top of the Himalayan peak nine times – more than any other woman in the world.

Born in Nepal, in the heart of the Himalayas, Lhakpa is one of 12 children. She never attended school. But she was always ambitious – physically and philosophically. Perhaps that’s why she says her most meaningful accomplishment was not her ninth summit of Mount Everest, but rather, her first.

“When I became the first Nepali women to summit Everest and survive, it opened the door for all Nepali women to understand that the outdoors are not just for men, and that women do not have to stay home,” she says.

A marriage to another climber with roots in Hartford is what brought her to this area in 2002; following their divorce, she moved with her children to West Hartford. Walking from their Park Road apartment to her job in Bishop’s Corner helps to keep her in shape, she says, without taking time away from her family for training.

“I love the outdoors,” she says, adding that she is “addicted to climbing” and that her body “needs it.” In 2020, she will attempt her tenth summit of Everest.

“I climb for all women,” she says. “There is no difference in climbing a mountain. If an uneducated woman who is a single mother can climb Everest nine times, any woman can achieve their dreams.”

