



Neighborly is excited to share that our keynote speaker at the Reunion 2021 will be **Erik Weihenmayer**, one of the most sought-after speakers in the world. Despite losing his vision at age 14, Erik is an accomplished climber, paraglider, skier and kayaker who never allows blindness to interfere with his passion for pursuing an exhilarating and fulfilling life.

Erik brings audiences a powerful message about harnessing the power of adversity as fuel for greatness, emphasizing the importance of building a strong “Rope Team,” and illuminating how to develop a “No Barriers Mindset.” Erik’s messages resonate with diverse audiences

from graduating college students to large sales teams to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

Erik’s speaking career has taken him around the globe from the 2005 APEC Summit in Chile to the 2009 Presidential Inaugural celebration in Washington, DC. Erik speaks to major companies in London, Dublin, Moscow, Berlin, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Abu Dhabi, as well as across the United States. Previously, he shared speaking platforms with luminaries such as Secretary Colin Powell, President Bill Clinton, and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

### **Pioneering Adventurer**

In 2001, Erik became the first blind person in history to reach the summit of Mount Everest. In 2008, he completed his quest to climb the Seven Summits — the highest mountain on each continent. Additionally, he has ascended dozens of major peaks, rock walls and ice climbs around the planet including the first blind ascent of the 3,000-foot Nose of El Capitan in Yosemite and an ascent of a rarely climbed 3,000-foot frozen waterfall in Nepal. In 2003, Erik competed in Primal Quest, among the toughest adventure races in the world: 457 miles, 9 days, 60,000 feet of elevation gain, and no time-outs. Averaging only two hours of sleep a night, Erik’s team was one of 42 to cross the finish line out of the 80 elite teams that started. In 2006, Erik created the Adventure Team Challenge, a first-of-its-kind adventure race in which teams of disabled and non-disabled athletes compete; his team won five years in a row. In 2010, he completed the Leadville 100 mountain bike race, with elevations all above 10,000 feet, on a tandem bike, once again becoming the first blind person to complete a world-class competition. And in 2011, Erik’s Team No Limits raced across the deserts and mountains of Morocco for a month, finishing in second place on the ABC reality show Expedition Impossible.

In September 2014, Erik and blinded Navy veteran Lonnie Bedwell kayaked the entire 277-miles of the Grand Canyon on the Colorado River, considered one of the most formidable whitewater venues in the world.

### **Celebrated Author**

In addition to being a renowned adventurer and speaker, Erik is also the author of *Touch the Top of the World*, which has been published in 12 languages. The book was made into an A&E movie and released on DVD by Sony. Erik’s second book, *The Adversity Advantage: Turning Everyday Struggles Into Everyday Greatness*, shares hard-earned lessons and practical advice for using adversity as fuel for growth and innovation. His latest book *No Barriers: A Blind Man’s Journey to Kayak the Grand Canyon* was released in February 2017.

## **Recognitions, Media, and Films**

Erik's adventures have earned him dozens of awards including an ESPY, Nike's Casey Martin award, and the Helen Keller Lifetime Achievement award. He is also a frequent television guest who has appeared on NBC's *Today Show*, *Oprah*, *Good Morning America*, and the *Tonight Show*. He was featured on the cover of *TIME* magazine, among others, and has also carried torches for both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

*Farther Than the Eye Can See*, the documentary of his Everest ascent, is ranked by *Men's Journal* as one of the top 20 adventure films of all time. The film won first prize at 21 international film festivals and was nominated for two Emmy awards. In 2004, Erik and six Everest team members trained a group of blind Tibetan students and then led them to 21,500 feet on the north side of Everest. *Blindsight*, the documentary of the ascent, won People's Choice Awards at the Los Angeles, London, and Berlin Film Festivals, and was released in theaters in 2007 to major accolades from film critics. Most recently, Erik was featured in the award-winning film *High Ground*, which was released in 2012.

## **Humanitarian Outreach**

In 2005, Erik co-founded No Barriers USA, a nonprofit organization that helps people of diverse abilities develop a No Barriers Mindset – to attack challenges head on, problem solve, build winning teams, and serve others. The signature event is the annual No Barriers Summit, bringing together technology, innovation, and adventure to engage attendees to tap into the human spirit, break through personal barriers, and create community and global breakthroughs.

In 2010, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their Everest climb, Erik and his team created No Barriers Warriors, a No Barriers program, to help veterans reclaim their lives by leading and serving again.