

## IN FIRST PERSON: I went Over the Edge with KIT

by Debbie Hatch

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Debbie Hatch rappels down the Manchester Grand Hyatt during the media portion of the Over the Edge for KIT event on Nov. 5. Photo courtesy of Bob Stefanko, publisher of Ranch & Coast Magazine.

**DOWNTOWN** — I rappelled 357 feet down the Manchester Grand Hyatt during the media portion of the second annual Over the Edge for KIT (Kids Included Together) on Friday, Nov. 5.

KIT is a nonprofit organization that supports groups and organizations, such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls clubs, on how to better serve and incorporate youth with disabilities into activities.

When KIT staffers were brainstorming ideas for its annual fundraiser last year, the team realized they needed to get creative.

KIT's CEO, Jan Giacinti, decided that holding a rappelling event was the way to go.

KIT utilized the services of Over the Edge, a Canadian company that assists nonprofits with not only the fundraising portion of the event, but is also responsible for training and sending thrill seekers "over the edge."

Over the Edge staffers Seth and Dave were two of the people who helped outfit me with a harness, helmet and gloves, and train me on rappelling techniques — as I have never rappelled before, nor have I ever been a thrill seeker.

While I was on the top of the Hyatt awaiting my turn to rappel, I looked out on the views of downtown and Coronado and could not believe that I was about to walk down the outside of the building when there was a perfectly beautiful system of elevators and escalators inside.

Seth did one last safety check and gave me blue booties to wear over my shoes, so as not to scuff up the wall with my sneakers. Then he talked me through the first step. He said, "just lean back."

I responded with a nervous laugh. Seth kept gently instructing me to lean back and I would respond with "okay" because I thought I was leaning back. I guess, however, my perception was skewed by the wide-open 357 feet below me, as I was not leaning back at all.

Once I took that first step backward and let myself lean away from the 33-story building, I never looked down, but I did look out at the views of the city. Maybe next year I will look down, but this year's accomplishment was just about doing it.

KIT staffers cheered for all of the rappellers from the landing site on the fourth floor. Their enthusiasm and encouragement will certainly help soothe any fears at Saturday's daylong event, which begins at 8 a.m.

Lucas Keller, one of KIT's first clients, rappelled in his wheelchair last year and is serving as the honorary chair this year. He was there to greet all of the rappellers who had gone over the edge.

Kelly Commerford, director of marketing for the Manchester Grand Hyatt, was also at the bottom congratulating rappellers.

It was an incredible experience with an amazing group of people from KIT, Over the Edge and the Hyatt, not to mention the other rappellers who helped cheer each other on.

For more information on today's event, visit [www.overtheedgeforkit.com](http://www.overtheedgeforkit.com).

KIT will be selling \$5 raffle tickets for the last minute opportunity to rappel, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Manchester Grand Hyatt, 1 Market Place.



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