

BodyTrek Theater

Imagine entering a theater and expecting to see a video about the human body. As the movie begins, you find yourself on an expedition up a 14,000-foot peak with an expert mountain guide. But you're not just watching the screen, you are actually experiencing the trek. You feel the wind blow as you ascend; you relax at a rest stop to view the panorama around you; you witness firsthand how your body responds to the elements as a sensor in your chair takes your pulse and measures the oxygen content of your blood.

Welcome to BodyTrek Theater, a premier feature of *Expedition Health*.

“At the core of this entire exhibition is the opportunity for visitors to measure their own biological responses at a cellular level, which is really where all new discoveries about human bodies are being made,” said Bridget Coughlin, PhD, curator of human health.

The film's story follows expedition leader and Colorado native Teal Maxwell as she climbs Mount Evans. Beginning at 8,200 feet above sea level and ascending to the 14,258-foot summit, Maxwell passes through forested terrain, maneuvers an ice-cold mountain stream, and finally makes her way across high alpine tundra to the summit. Along the way, her body is constantly changing and adapting to her surroundings. The audience takes part in the journey through a unique participatory theater that is the first of its kind in the Rocky Mountain Region. It features interactive seats that test and display blood oxygen saturation and pulse readings. Special effects, including wind, falling “snow,” and light-pinpointed objects in the theater, make the visitors' experience—and the science content within it—come to life.

Visitors witness how bodies adapt to extremes, such as high altitude and extreme exertion, without actually being in that environment. For instance, as Maxwell continues her climb to higher altitudes, her body adapts to lower levels of oxygen in the air. Visitors see, however, that despite having less oxygen available, the cells in Maxwell's body get the same amount of oxygen as their cells receive while sitting in the theater.

“This really gets at the core of the exhibition, which is to show how adaptable your body is and how it is constantly changing to deal with your environment—that which surrounds you as well as that which you create,” Coughlin said.

A former staff member at the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), Maxwell has been a second-grade teacher at Cheyenne Mountain School in Colorado Springs and has a passion for getting kids outside. Filming for the show was completed in Summer 2008. The film is produced by Science North in Sudbury, Ontario, and was filmed by Serac Adventure Films, a Boulder-based company that was involved in the production of *The Alps* and *Everest* for IMAX theaters.

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