

YWCA WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT LUNCHEON
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Exclusively Representing



Alison Levine

**Team Captain of the First American Women's Everest Expedition
and Groundbreaking Polar Adventurer**

Alison Levine is no stranger to risk-taking. She has survived sub-zero temperatures, hurricane-force winds, sudden avalanches, and a career on Wall Street – all without the use of supplemental oxygen.

Surprisingly, Levine was born with a life-threatening heart condition that precluded most demanding physical activities. As a teenager, her health was so unstable that she was not even allowed to do such basic things as drive a car or walk up stairs. But 13 years after her initial diagnosis she had surgery that changed her life – and climbing stairs soon gave way to climbing mountains, a passion she continued to pursue despite her initial health setbacks.

Over the years as she continued to climb the corporate ladder, Levine also pushed her limits on the world's highest peaks and soon became one of the most experienced female mountaineers in the country. She has climbed peaks on every continent, served as the team captain of the first American Women's Everest Expedition, and skied across the Arctic Circle to the geographic North Pole. In January 2008, she made history as the first American to complete a 600-mile traverse from west Antarctica to the South Pole following the route of legendary explorer Reinhold Messner. Levine completed this arduous journey on skis while hauling 150 pounds of her gear and supplies in a sled harnessed to her waist. Her success in extreme environments is noteworthy given she suffers from a neurological disease that causes the arteries that feed her fingers and toes to collapse in cold weather, leaving her at extreme risk for frostbite.

Levine's expeditions have been documented by more than 450 media outlets. She is the subject of the PBS documentary *Living Courageously* (2007) and has made numerous appearances on

*The Today Show, Good Morning America, CNN, CNBC, FOX, CBS' Evening News, and other national programs. She is featured prominently in the book *More Than 85 Broads* (J Hanson, McGraw Hill), the book that captures the efforts of women on Wall Street to find success and take risks on their own terms. Her accomplishments are also featured in other books including *Smart Moves* (Curran & Greenwald, Ten Speed Press) and *In Extremis Leadership* (T Kolditz, Wiley & Sons). Her story has been the subject of articles in *Oprah Magazine, National Geographic, Entrepreneur, Sports Illustrated, Outside,* and other publications.*

In addition to having tackled some of the most extreme environments in the outdoors, Levine has also spent more than two decades in the business world. Her professional career has encompassed healthcare, technology and finance. After earning her MBA from Duke University she moved to New York to work for investment banking firm Goldman Sachs. In 2003, she left Wall Street to serve as deputy finance director for Arnold Schwarzenegger in his successful bid to become Governor of California.

Levine currently serves as an adjunct professor at the United States Military Academy at West Point in the Department of Behavioral Sciences & Leadership. She also has her own consulting firm, Daredevil Strategies, which specializes in organizational effectiveness, leadership development and team dynamics. By drawing parallels between staying alive in the mountains and thriving in a fast-paced business world, Levine focuses on the topics of leadership, teamwork, overcoming odds, taking responsible risks and dealing with changing environments.

In 2005, she founded the Climb High Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of jobless women in Africa by training them to be trekking guides and porters in their local mountains so they will have the skills to earn a sustainable living wage through climbing-related tourism.