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Mark Quinn, 26, pictured on the summit of Mt Aconcagua in the Andes is hoping to raise €30,000 for the Shane Geoghegan Trust

Mark sets sights on top of the world for charity

■ Rhebogue climber hopes to climb Everest for Shane Geoghegan Trust

Anne Sheridan

A LIMERICK man is taking on the challenge of a lifetime in seeking to become the youngest Irish person to reach the summit of Mount Everest next year.

Just three years after climbing Carrantuohill, Mark Quinn, 26, from Rhebogue is planning to scale the highest mountain in the world next March.

Mr Quinn is hoping to raise one euro for every foot conquered of the 29,000 foot climb, potentially €30,000 for the Shane Geoghegan Trust.

The charity, which was set up after the Garryowen rugby player was shot dead in a case of mistaken identity, raises funds for youth programmes in the city.

and offers young people an alternative to a life of crime.

"It's an honour to be able to do it," Mr Quinn told the Leader. "Not everyone is in a position to fundraise or train for something like this, so I'm really excited. Even climbing Caranthouhill, the first mountain I climbed, was inspiring."

An active fundraiser since he left school, he has already jumped from a plane at 10,000 feet and run a marathon to raise money for charity.

Now, he is going where few have gone before - embarking on the treacherous climb, which was achieved by Pat Falvey, the first Irishman to do so, 17 years ago.

To date the youngest

Irish person to summit Everest is Cork woman Samantha Carroll who reached the summit in 2004, aged 28.

While the physical and psychological aspects of the training are now on his mind, the purpose of the Shane Geoghegan Trust is also driving him towards his goal.

"Organisations like the Geoghegan Trust are not just creating a future for young people otherwise forgotten about, they are actively saving lives and changing the social structure of Limerick city," said Mr Quinn.

He has reached the summit of Mount Aconcagua in the Argentinean Andes, which stands 6,962m above sea level.

However, Everest is 8,848m above sea level and above 8,000m, climbers enter the 'death zone', where the level of oxygen drops dramatically, blood thickens, the risk of frostbite increases and brain function decreases as your body begins to shut down.

Mayor of Limerick, Cllr Maria Byrne, and Munster rugby player David Wallace, wished him a safe journey and paid tribute to his bravery at the Savoy hotel this week, when he announced his plans.

Kevin O'Connor, of Shannon Development, said he hopes Mr Quinn will plant the Limerick city flag at the summit and noted his challenge coincides with Limerick being a designated city of sport next year.

Ger Clarke of the Shane Geoghegan Trust said when he received the call from Mr Quinn his first reaction was: "Do you really know what you're doing?"

Mr Clarke said the Trust was set up to do some good out of something which was "so horrific."

"You could spend your life cursing the darkness, but it's better to light a candle," he said.

"We hope that every step [up Everest] is a step for Shane."

■ To support Mark's Mount Everest bid, an account has been opened in Ulster Bank, O'Connell Street, Limerick. Account number 10041826, sort code 98-60-20. To follow his expedition, see www.highaltitudeireland.org.