

Polar explorer to speak on hot topic

Larsen saw environmental change during Arctic expedition

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In the Upstate, the closest we come to ice is the stuff floating in our tea or what we scrape off our windshields with credit cards on rare winter days.

For Eric Larsen, ice was a constant during 2009, the year he made his way to both the North and South Poles, as well as the summit of Mount Everest. And if a polar explorer seems an odd fit to speak to South Carolinians about his icy experiences, Larsen disagrees.

"It's not about the Arctic exclusively; it's more about the human story," Larsen said in a phone interview from Boulder, Colo., last week. "We can all relate to that."

And Upstate residents will get a chance to hear from Larsen when he speaks at Upstate Forever's Annual Awards Luncheon on Feb. 2. While Larsen's adventures have taken him literally around the world, he counts himself as an average Joe.

"I grew up in the Midwest," he said. "I'm not the strongest, I'm not the smartest. For me, the adventures were about overcoming physical and mental barriers."

Larsen is also quick to credit the teamwork that allowed him to see the world's natural wonders. While he's mainly found himself in cold conditions, he said he's spoken in

Hawaii and Costa Rica, as well as northern Minnesota, where "the temperatures are often colder than in the Arctic." In every location, people can relate to the challenges Larsen encountered.

One issue he found in the Arctic was very real proof of climate change.

"The Arctic Ocean is going through very dramatic changes. It's a much warmer climate in Antarctica now," he said, about his experiences in the region in 2006 and a return trip in 2010. "In just four years, there's more open water. The ice is thinner. The ice is moving in these crazy patterns. It's ... substantial change."

During his Greenville presentation, he'll show a film and slides and speak on the topic "In the Heart of Cold."



Polar adventurer Eric Larsen will speak in Greenville on Thursday.

FOREVER GREEN AWARDS LUNCHEON

Polar explorer Eric Larsen is the keynote speaker Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at Upstate Forever's annual banquet.

In addition to Larsen's presentation, six awards will be presented: Clean Water Champion, Partners for Trust; Clear Skies Champion, City of Greenville; Public Servant of the Year, John Frampton; Sustainable Communities Champion, City of Spartanburg; Tommy Wyche Land Conservation Champion, Bettina George; and Volunteer of the Year, Jim Gossett.

Tickets are \$50. The luncheon is at Embassy Suites, Greenville.

For sponsorship and ticket information, contact August Darnell at: 864-232-2302 or August@CrawfordStrategy.com

» Find more about Eric Larsen at: www.ericlarsenexplore.com