

NEWS RELEASE

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"Blind Ambitiion"

For Immediate Release



Atlanta Rocks! Intown

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ATLANTA – (June 15, 2011) – Dexter Gilbert, 40, of Atlanta, is just like any other rock climber that you might see scaling the walls at Atlanta Rocks! Indoor Rock Climbing Gym in Midtown, Atlanta. He's into sports and motivated by a desire to seek new challenges. But, for Gilbert, climbing, in his own words, is "about four times as hard," as it is for most other climbers. To the casual observer, it's not instantly obvious why that's so. At six-feet tall, with an athletic build, Gilbert seems like he would be made for climbing. And then you notice that Gilbert is blind.

Gilbert, who lost his sight at the age of six, first became interested in climbing while watching a gentleman talk about his experiences climbing Mount Everest on the Oprah show. "I did research on him and decided I wanted to try it, which led me to Atlanta Rocks!," Gilbert says matter-of-factly.

At Atlanta Rocks! Gilbert didn't get any special treatment because of his disability. He was required to pass the same belay test and attend the same introductory class as sighted climbers. When asked about the reaction at Atlanta Rocks! when he walked in the door, Gilbert — who attended the Intro Class with a friend — notes that they "handled it well."

Peter Bloeme, Atlanta Rocks! Co-founder, recalls the first time he saw Gilbert walk in the gym. "My first thought was that he must really be lost," Bloeme says with a smile, "but then he approached the counter to check in. I pulled up his record on the computer and, sure enough, he was approved to climb and belay. After watching him climb, I was impressed at how deliberately and gracefully he moved despite not being able to see the holds he was reaching for."

Watching Gilbert navigate the vertical world, without the benefit of sight, is an amazing and inspiring sight. As General Manager David Turrentine observes, “Climbing is like a puzzle. At first, a certain climb might seem unclimbable. But after trying this and that, you solve the problem and move on. That's what Dexter does, but without the benefit of sight.”

Gilbert, who takes a Marta Bus to Atlanta Rocks!, three times each week, encourages others with disabilities to give climbing a try with the good-natured challenge — “Don't be a wuss!”

Gilbert works as a guide at Dialogue in the Dark and, when he's not climbing at Atlanta Rocks!, enjoys Bujinkan Ninjutsu, clay sculpting, lifting weights, and spending time with his cat “Chase.”

Atlanta Rocks! Indoor Climbing Gym is located at 1019 Collier Rd NW, Ste A, near the Howell Mill Road exit off of I-75. Atlanta Rocks! is open Monday-Friday from 11 am until 10 pm; Saturday from 12 pm-8 pm; and Sunday from 12 pm-6 pm. For more information or driving directions, call 404-351-3009 or visit www.atlantarocks.com.

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