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Aspen rallies behind Haiti

Writer:

Troy Hooper

Byline:

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

An outpouring of support for victims of the earthquake in Haiti is under way in Aspen, where residents are busily working to send money and supplies.

Joe and Susan Krabacher are leading the charge with their nonprofit Mercy and Sharing Foundation, which for years has been helping alleviate the suffering in Haiti, before the earthquake, by developing educational programs to combat illiteracy, medical facilities to heal the sick, and social programs to create hope.

The Krabachers are reportedly already either in Haiti or en route.

Joe Krabacher fears some of the charity's 146 employees may have died from the catastrophic quake, according to the Grand Junction Sentinel, and he told the paper he is unsure what might have happened to 32 abandoned and disabled children the Mercy and Sharing Foundation has been looking after.

A 7.0 earthquake struck near the capital of Port-au-Prince, home to 2 million people and one of the world's poorest cities. Tens of thousands died as countless buildings collapsed, including hospitals, hillside slums and the nation's presidential palace. The death toll is still being tallied.

Tomorrow, on Sunday, a fundraiser is planned in Aspen at Bad Billy's from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. that requires a \$20 donation to the Stop Hunger Now charity. The donation will get you free beer, free wine, free appetizers and "the good feeling in your heart that you are saving someone's life," according to a press release.

Aspen resident Dave "Lags" Lageschulce has been involved with Stop Hunger Now for the last six years. The charity has been active in feeding the poor in Haiti since 1999. Lageschulce has pledged to raise \$100,000 from friends and family to assist Haiti and said he will match the pledge dollar for dollar.

"We are trying to raise a total of \$200,000," he said, noting that the relationships the charity has built will ensure aid is properly distributed.

For more information, go to www.stophungernow.org.lagshaitireliefchallenge [1].

A benefit at the Wheeler Opera House is also planned for Feb. 11. Bobby Mason, Melissa Hefferon, Heart of the Rockies, The Last Minute String Band and Cottonwood Acoustic have all committed to the show, which will charge \$25 for adults, \$15 for those who are 18 years old and under, and VIP tickets will sell for \$500, which includes reserved seating and VIP accolades.

A group of local standup comics, including Mark Thomas, Gail Mason and special guest Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland, are planning a show at the Viceroy ballroom on Thursday, Jan. 21, that will benefit the Krabachers' foundation.

Also a non-sectarian fund that "will go entirely to medical and other essential needs" has been set up at the Haiti Disaster Relief Fund, c/o United Jewish Appeal Aspen Valley, PO Box 8590 Aspen CO 81612.

There are countless other ways to contribute aid to Haiti — UPS has been shipping supplies there weighing under 50 pounds for free — that can be found on the Internet or in letters to the editors of Aspen's papers. This article is by no means a complete list, but a starting point for those who would like to help.

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[1] <http://www.stophungernow.org.lagshaitireliefchallenge>