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Aspen-based Haiti org in midst of disaster relief

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One week after a massive earthquake leveled Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Aspenite Susie Krabacher reports from Haiti that a disordered relief effort is underway and her children's foundation needs donations to keep it going.

Krabacher and husband Joe co-founded the Mercy and Sharing Foundation in 1994 to provide aid to abandoned and mistreated children in the impoverished nation.

They are taking in evacuees at Mercy and Sharing's 20-acre Williamson Campus, an orphanage and clinic 40 miles outside of the hard-hit capital.

"We have relief supplies arriving at Williamson project thanks to Feed the Hungry and [its executive director] Stefan Radelich including water, food, and diesel fuel so we will have operations stabilizing," reads yesterday's update.

While the Williamson facilities were spared from devastating damage, their orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Cazeau, is all but gone.

"At Cazeau the walls are so fragile they can be pushed over by hand," the Krabachers wrote.

Cazeau had been home to more than 100 children, most of them handicapped, but many were moved out to the Williamson Campus before last week's quake. Those remaining and all living staff have subsequently been evacuated to Williamson.

Mercy and Sharing's Abandoned Baby Unit (ABU) — among the nonprofit's original projects — was housed in a public hospital in Port-au-Prince, which was "pancaked, collapsed and devastated," the Krabachers reported. "All abandoned baby unit children have been evacuated and are moved to undisclosed location due to security issues," the update said. "Some kids have TB and they are being treated in isolation ward. All kids from ABU are undergoing medical checkups."

Survivors remain concerned about looting and violence in the face of limited essentials like food and water, which Susie Krabacher addressed with on-the-ground military.

"Susie met with the Marines this morning to talk to them about security," said yesterday's report. "There are helicopters flying all over the city and that seems to have quelled some of the unrest and looting."

With Susie on the ground in Haiti, Joe is overseeing their foundation's operations from Aspen. Yesterday he sent a list of their 140-plus employees to recovery authorities, to begin tallying who

among them is alive and dead.

“Everyone we have talked to on our staff has lost family members,” Joe said yesterday.

While they do now have the capability to buy supplies on the ground, delivery systems and staging remain snarled nationwide. So the Krabachers are asking those interested to make cash donations at [www.haitichildren.org](http://www.haitichildren.org) [1] rather than attempting to send food or medicine directly.

Meanwhile, Mercy and Sharing is partnering with locals in the Roaring Fork Valley to raise funds for their efforts. The Viceroy Hotel and Resort in Snowmass Village will host a benefit stand-up comedy show on Thursday, featuring a routine by Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland. Also in Snowmass, the Krabloonik dog-sledding restaurant and kennels is hosting a Mercy and Sharing fundraiser brunch on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The suggested donation is \$75 for the meal or \$125 for the meal and a dog-sled ride.

Local musicians including John Oates, Bobby Mason and Jimmy Ibbotson are also coming together for a Mercy and Sharing Benefit at the Wheeler Opera House on Thursday, Feb. 11. Tickets are \$25, \$15 for students and \$1,000 for those wishing to be VIP sponsors.

The Krabachers founded Mercy and Sharing as a Christian outreach ministry. The organization’s co-founders and board of directors contribute more than 100 percent of all administrative expenses, according to their mission statement, meaning all outside contributions go directly to their relief projects.

Joe Krabacher’s day job is as an attorney with Aspen’s Sherman & Howard. Susie Krabacher is an award-winning humanitarian and was made an honorary citizen of Haiti in 2000 for her extensive work there. Before founding the ministry she was best known as a Playboy Playmate and cover model.

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[1] <http://www.haitichildren.org>