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CNN features Aspenites' Haiti org

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Aspen's Susie Krabacher appeared on CNN live from an earthquake-devastated Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Wednesday morning, where she is scrambling to account for her Christian ministry's staff along with the handicapped, orphaned and abandoned children they care for.

In the satellite interview with CNN anchor John Roberts she said that her Mercy & Sharing foundation — founded in 1994 with her husband, Joe — has lost many of its children, including 32 missing from their abandoned baby unit. But the quake that is estimated to have killed 200,000 and made as many as 2 million homeless has also created a more dire need for the services Mercy & Sharing provides.

“We are expecting hundreds more abandoned and orphaned children,” Susie said. “And I do assume that many of them — we'll take permanent custody of the children, providing that we have help from the people back in the States. We're going to need help from you.”

Shortly after the cable news interview, an aftershock registering 6.1 on the Richter scale shook the capitol with the biggest quake since Jan. 12.

Joe Krabacher, an Aspen-based attorney who is coordinating their relief efforts in Haiti from here, later said they do not think the aftershock caused substantial additional damage to their facilities, which include orphanages, school and clinics in Port-au-Prince, as well as a 20-acre orphanage and clinic 40 miles outside of the capital.

Mercy & Sharing's team in Haiti had just surveyed their school and food program in the Port-au-Prince shanty town of Cite de Soleil on Tuesday. Cite de Soleil is a 27-square-mile slum built on a landfill. It had no electricity or modern plumbing before the earthquake, and Joe Krabacher described it Wednesday as “the poorest slum in the Western Hemisphere, and one of the poorest areas on earth.”

The ministry team is primarily attempting to get relief supplies to their Williamson campus, where they have evacuated children and families from Cite de Soleil and elsewhere within the city. Among the recent successes they've counted in the logistical nightmare of post-quake Haiti was purchasing 100 gallons of diesel fuel on the black market.

“Our next challenges are to begin rebuilding our staff at Williamson, they are for the most part missing, or in shock and unable to work, or busy searching for and burying their family members,” Joe wrote to their supporters Wednesday.

Their living and able-bodied staffers have gone without pay since the earthquake because no banks

are left on the island, Krabacher reported Wednesday, which is causing greater difficulties for staff who themselves need supplies to survive.

Wednesday they were working on getting 100 tons of food transported inland to their facilities, which Susie described as “absolutely impossible to get” during her CNN interview. Mercy & Sharing hired a private security force from the nonprofit Humanitarian Defense to help. They have also gained permission to carry firearms, which is ordinarily illegal for non-Haitians. Joe described the armed security as an unfortunate necessity to protect the communities they are serving from violent food riots.

“[E]veryone in the community will know where the food is located and we are going to create security problems,” Joe told Mercy & Sharing’s supporters. “This is the reason why we are going to have to send in a security team, and get them armed so that they can protect the children and the food. I know that may be hard to understand living in the comfort that we have, but when people are starving, water is scarce, and the local people have their own families and children to think about, things frequently get out of control.”

A flotilla of U.S. Navy ships also docked in Haiti on Wednesday, staffed with military doctors to provide medical care for the hard-hit nation. Aspen native Tara High Wilson, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, is among the doctors on hand. Lt. Comm. High Wilson is a general surgeon based at Portsmouth Naval Hospital in Virginia. She graduated from Aspen High School in 1994.

Here in the Roaring Fork Valley, new Haiti fundraisers are coming together daily, including four events with all proceeds going to the Krabachers’ Mercy & Sharing foundation:

Tonight the Viceroy Hotel and Resort in Snowmass Village will host a benefit stand-up comedy show at 6 p.m., featuring a routine by Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland. Admission is free, but donations are suggested.

On Friday the De Vore Gallery on Durant Street in Aspen is holding a silent auction of work by local artists and donors from 5:30-8:30 p.m.

The Krabloonik dog-sledding restaurant and kennels is hosting a Mercy & Sharing fundraiser brunch on Sunday from 10 a.m.-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 playing 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.

You can also donate directly to Mercy & Sharing at www.haitichildren.com [1].
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Susie Krabacher is pictured in Haiti's Cite de Soleil slum on Wednesday where she worked on getting 100 tons of food transported inland to her and her husband Joe's Mercy & Sharing foundation facilities which include schools, orphanages and clinics.

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