

Rotary Clubs Worldwide Mobilize to Help Meet the Massive Need for Humanitarian Aid in Haiti

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EVANSTON, Ill. (Jan. 27, 2010) -- From raising funds to collecting relief supplies to distributing life-saving shelters in Port-au-Prince, Rotary clubs worldwide continue to ramp up efforts to assist the victims of the killer earthquake that struck Haiti on Jan. 12.

And that includes members of the 17 Rotary clubs operating in Haiti, where pediatrician Claude Surena, a Rotary member in Port-au-Prince, has been tapped by President Rene Preval to coordinate the national government's emergency response. The chair of Rotary's Haiti Disaster Preparedness Committee, Dr. Surena and fellow Haitian Rotary members are helping to make sure incoming relief supplies are used effectively. He and his family also have been caring for injured quake victims on the grounds of their home since the disaster occurred.

Among the first international relief workers to reach Haiti were volunteers from ShelterBox www.shelterbox.org a U.K.-based disaster response organization supported by Rotary clubs worldwide. Each ShelterBox kit contains a 10-person tent, a water purification system and other survival necessities. About 2,000 ShelterBoxes -- enough to assist 20,000 people -- are in Haiti, and another 3,000 are due within a week, coordinated by logistics teams set up in Miami, Fla., and Santo Domingo, D.R. The ShelterBox team is first targeting pregnant women and families with newborns, but as team member Mark Pearson says, "The walking wounded are everywhere."

Nearly 1,500 of the walking wounded have been treated by 23 physicians volunteering with Comprehensive Disaster Response Services, assisted by six volunteers from two New York City Rotary clubs. Another 600 patients were admitted to the team's emergency hospital. The team worries that as time passes, the risk of disease will increase. "Should it rain, there will be outbreaks of cholera and other diseases," says volunteer Jim Kushner, of the Rotary Club of Inwood, Manhattan, N.Y.

Clubs throughout the regional Rotary district that includes Haiti quickly mobilized to send more than 55 planes carrying 50,000 pounds of medical equipment and supplies into the cities of Pignon and Port-de-Paix, bypassing the myriad of

logistical problems in Port-au-Prince. Rotary clubs throughout the Caribbean have raised more than \$310,000 for immediate relief and long-term rebuilding.

“Rotary had an incredible infrastructure established before the quake, which has made our relief efforts very effective,” says Dick McCombe, a member of the Rotary Club of South-East Nassau, Bahamas, noting that Rotary was in good position to help in Haiti, with 33 projects already underway to provide water, sanitation, medical care, and education even before the earthquake.

The Rotary Foundation has set up a Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund to streamline the flow of contributions, primarily for U.S. club members. Fund managers will work with local Rotary clubs and relief agencies to meet the most pressing needs of communities in the affected area. Funds will be used in the relief effort, and for projects providing longer-term support and development.

Other examples of Rotary’s worldwide response to the disaster in Haiti:

- Rotary clubs in South Korea quickly raised \$100,000 to support a medical team sent to Haiti by the Korean Foundation for International Healthcare.
- In Honduras, The Rotary Club of Tocoa collected more than 70,000 pounds of food and medicine and arranged for three cargo flights into Port-au-Prince, with more on the way. “We remember how the world helped us after Hurricane Mitch,” said Rotary member Juan Gomez.
- The Rotary Club of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, enlisted the Grand Prix Atlantic Regatta to set sail for the Dominican Republic with 24 yachts loaded with relief supplies. The fleet will arrive in Santo Domingo by the end of January, where local Rotary members will unload supplies for transport into neighboring Haiti.

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Rotary – an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide in humanitarian service - has more than 1.2 million members in more than 33,000 clubs in over 200 countries and geographic regions. For more information, visit www.rotary.org.

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