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Media Contact:

Blair Ciecko

708-655-2045

blairc@celticchicago.com

Hollywood in Haiti to Help Children in Need

Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos, supported by Friends of the Orphans, assists thousands in need and serves important role in community

December 9, 2008--Paul & Deborah Haggis, Madeline Stowe, Josh Brolin & Diane Lane, Maria Bello & Bryn Mooser, Jimmy Jean-Louis, Michael Stahl David, and Senator John Edwards were in Haiti with NPH – Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Spanish for “Our Little Brothers and Sisters”) for the inauguration of the first Rehabilitation Centre for disabled children in the country, and the launch of “Francisville – New Work City.”

Two-time Academy Award® winner Paul Haggis went to the slums of Haiti last February to meet Father Richard Frechette, priest and doctor, who has been working with the children of Port Au Prince for over twenty years.

Haiti is one of the two poorest countries in the world. “Father Rick,” as he is known to the people of its massive slums, is the Head of NPH – Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (Our Little Brothers and Sisters, Nos Petit Freres and Soeurs), a humanitarian organization founded in 1954.

In Haiti today, two hundred and fifty children die every week, most from easily preventable diseases. One child out of three dies before reaching the age of five. Of those who survive, one child out of two does not go to school. Seventy percent of its people are unemployed.

While in Haiti, Haggis visited several NPH projects, including the orphanage that Father Rick founded twenty years ago, home to six hundred abandoned children, and the beautiful new pediatric hospital he built -- the largest in the Caribbean. He also spent time at Father Rick’s street schools in the slums, which provide an education and a hot meal a day to over 3,000 children, and NPH’s water distribution centre, which provides the only clean water available to thousands of people. Father Rick also built the only free

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mortuary and cemetery. As terrible as it sounds, until he did so, most poor parents were unable to bury their dead children, and their bodies were simply left on a hill, and as a result suffered terrible indignities.

Paul was also there to witness the beginning of construction of NPH's rehabilitation centre for disabled children. Last December 3rd, a date internationally celebrated as World Day for Disability, Paul and a group of friends went back to Haiti for the inauguration of "Kay Saint Germaine – House of Little Angels," the first rehab centre in the country for disabled children. The life of these children is especially difficult in Haiti. According to voodoo worship, the disabled are considered cursed. They are therefore shunned, often abandoned, or worse.

Those visiting on this occasion did so to support NPH and Father Rick in spreading information and awareness about the plight of the handicapped children in Haiti and the urgent need of help for all the children in this forgotten country.

The group, which included Paul & Deborah Haggis, Madeline Stowe, Josh Brolin & Diane Lane, Maria Bello & Bryn Mooser, Jimmy Jean-Louis, Michael Stahl David, ex-senator John Edwards, and from Italy, italian model and actress Martina Colombari, attended the inauguration of the Rehab Centre, together with hundreds of disabled children and their mothers. Wishing messages have been sent by the Pope and by Andrea Bocelli with a moving video.

Actors and actresses wore a special, limited edition T-shirt designed by Elio Fiorucci for Fondazione Francesca Rava – NPH Italia Onlus (representing NPH in Italy), specifically to raise funds for Kay Saint Germaine – House of little Angles. This t-shirt can be booked on the website www.nphitalia.org with a donation of 25 euro (\$32, shipment cost not included).

During their staying in Haiti, the group visited NPH paediatric hospital and its little patients, witnessed a moving funeral ceremony for 2 children died in the night, went to the slums of Wharf Jeremie and Citè Soleil where Father Rick built Street Schools, helped downloading a container of humanitarian items, and attended the kick-off of a new project, Francisville, a site where small factories and a professional school will be built, to produce basic goods such as bread, soap and shoes in order to relieve social stress, provide jobs and training, and create resources to at least partially sustain NPH humanitarian projects in the country.

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Friends of the Orphans, a 40-year-old non-profit organization, is the "face" of NPH in the U.S. and provides a tax-deductible avenue for American donors to support NPH. For more information on ways to support NPH in Haiti or any of the nine countries NPH supports, or to donate or sponsor a child in need, visit www.friendsoftheorphans.org or call 866-690-1703.

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