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Children Across Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos Orphanages Raise Funds for “Brother and Sister” Orphans in Haiti

CHICAGO—January 28, 2010—In a story that warms the heart, groups of children in orphanages across Latin America and the Caribbean are eagerly donating their time and money to help out the thousands of newly-orphaned children in Haiti. They are children of the Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH, Spanish for “Our Little Brothers and Sisters”) network of homes and outreach programs found in nine countries: Mexico, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Bolivia.

“The devotion and generosity of the children speaks volumes about the NPH family and the principles of love, sharing and responsibility that we embrace,” said Sharon Saxelby, CEO of Friends of the Orphans, which supports the work of NPH in transforming the lives of orphaned, abandoned and disadvantaged children.

“For children so young to sacrifice what little they have for others in need is a wonderful lesson in philanthropy for all of us. Their response to this crisis is inspiring, and reminds us what can be achieved when we each do our part to help the victims.”

Because of the widespread destruction in Haiti, the need continues for cash donations and supplies that help ensure the daily survival of victims. To help meet those needs, the children at each NPH home have stepped up to donate, hold fundraisers, and organize prayer services for those in Haiti.

In Bolivia, where NPH operates a home in San Ignacio de Sara, the children have donated more than \$200 of their own money to their brother and sister orphans in Haiti. Most of the money came from the annual \$30 stipend each child in Bolivia receives from first through eighth grade to cover tuition fees, uniform costs, and other educational expenses—an incentive for families to keep their children in school rather than placing them in the workforce.

“At NPH, it’s customary to take the children to the market and use part of the stipend for new school supplies and back-to-school clothes, an outing they really anticipate each

year,” said Kara King, Interim National Director at NPH Bolivia. “But when the earthquake struck, the children asked if they could donate half or even all of that money to Haiti instead. They are content to use last year’s uniform, last year’s backpack, or buy thread to repair their shoes instead of buying a new pair.”

The Bolivia home also set up an altar where the children can pray for the people of Haiti. During a most recent prayer service, the oldest children in the home made a commitment to help with a fundraising campaign in nearby communities and schools.

Prayed a 10-year girl named Melvy, “Our brothers and sisters in Haiti, I would like you to know that we will not forget you, you are always in our hearts. We care for you, don’t feel badly, God will help you and we will be thinking of you with much love and thinking about how we can help you.”

At NPH Honduras, the children spent a weekend asking for donations in the hot streets of downtown Tegucigalpa, where they successfully raised \$1,400. Their efforts were especially gratifying as NPH had previously arranged to have HSBC Bank match all donations made in Honduras for the earthquake fund. As a result, the NPH children were able to double the amount they earned and donated to victims.

On Saturday, Jan. 16, thirty-five children from NPH Mexico volunteered at the Red Cross. Grateful for the chance to lend a helping hand, the children spent six hours sorting through supplies for Haiti, packaging them for shipping, and loading them onto trucks.

“We have been praying,” said NPH Mexico *pequeña* Maria, “The *pequeños* in the NPH home in Haiti are our brothers and sisters. It doesn’t matter that they are in another county. We need to help them.”

The NPH family in the Dominican Republic is rallying around the cause as well. Playing an especially central role in relief efforts, the NPH children have been working tirelessly alongside staff members and volunteers to gather supplies and funds to ensure that St. Damien’s in Tabarre—the only free pediatric hospital in Haiti—can serve as many people as possible. Since their first shipment a day and a half after the earthquake struck, NPH Dominican Republic has sent seven trucks and busloads of vital supplies, including mattresses, tents, food, water, fuel, and medical equipment. Their close proximity to Haiti has enabled NPH Dominican Republic to make an immediate impact where other organizations might be limited.

Even in Haiti, at the NPH orphanage in Kenscoff (untouched by the earthquake), the children are doing what little they can to aid victims. Busloads of them have visited St. Damien’s to pray for the suffering and visit the injured, many of whom are children like themselves.

The concern and kindness bestowed upon patients by the NPH children has brightened the atmosphere at the hospital. Said Fr. Rick Frechette, priest, physician and hospital administrator at St. Damien's, "It is bittersweet to walk through our hospital and see so many children that are missing a limb, still with a big smile. The support of children from our other NPH homes makes a huge difference, and we are very grateful."

BACKGROUND:

Chicago-based Friends of the Orphans, a U.S. fundraising arm, and Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos International (NPH) transform the lives of orphaned, abandoned and disadvantaged children in Latin American and the Caribbean, including Haiti. Our presence in Haiti includes our orphanage with 350 children, various community and education programs and the establishment of the country's only free pediatric hospital. NPH's hospital programs also help adults in need and last year, staff and volunteers treated more than 30,000 children and adults.

Friends of the Orphans, a 40-year-old nonprofit, has six regional offices in the United States that support a network of NPH homes and their outreach programs in nine Latin American and Caribbean countries. Since its founding in 1954, NPH has assisted nearly 16,000 children and currently cares for more than 3,300 in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru. For more information about Friends of the Orphans, please visit www.friendsoftheorphans.org.

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