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Nos Petits Frères et Soeurs and Friends of the Orphans Introduce Response Program for Vulnerable and Displaced Children in Haiti

*Father Wasson Angels of Light takes children out of tent cities for
proper shelter, medical attention, and care*

CHICAGO—March 8, 2010—As Haiti fades from media headlines, thousands of its children are living in dire conditions, vulnerable to disease, exploitation and abuse. To help rapidly address this conflict, Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos/Nos Petits Frères et Soeurs (NPH/NPFS, Spanish and French for “Our Little Brothers and Sisters”) has created a way to serve children left orphaned, vulnerable, and displaced by the earthquake through the new *Father Wasson Angels of Light* program.

An inspiring combination of resources, volunteers, staff, and determination, the *Father Wasson Angels of Light* program, named after NPH/NPFS founder Father William B. Wasson, addresses the immediate, mid-term, and long-term needs of children affected by Haiti’s devastating 7.0-magnitude earthquake in January.

“The number of orphans in Haiti has only grown larger since the earthquake struck, raising a lot of concerns about child welfare,” said Sharon Saxelby, president and CEO of Friends of the Orphans, the American fundraising arm of NPH/NPFS. “Because of the enormous need, our staff and volunteers are working around the clock to help bring these children out of the poverty in which they’re living, and we are grateful for the overwhelming, ongoing support of our donors.”

Created by NPH/NPFS—a network of homes and their outreach programs in nine Latin American and Caribbean countries that raises orphaned, abandoned, and disadvantaged children—in collaboration with Friends of the Orphans, the *Angels of Light* program has five main objectives:

1. To provide permanent care to children orphaned by the earthquake by integrating them into the existing NPFS home and by providing extra care for those with mental and physical problems as a result of the tragedy.

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2. To identify children left homeless or otherwise unable to care for themselves but who still have families, and therefore do not need to be integrated into the NPFS family. The goal with these children is to provide temporary care until they are reunited with their families.
3. To invite severely disabled children who are victims of the earthquake to join the NPFS family either permanently or provisionally until they are able to function on their own and rejoin their family through NPFS' assistance in providing prosthesis or other necessary aid.
4. To refer children for whom NPFS is unable to provide appropriate care—such as previous street children or inmates of the juvenile prison—to other, more suitable organizations.
5. To provide assistance to older children with families in need but who are better situated to remain in their neighborhoods.

In order to help as many children as quickly and efficiently as possible, NPH/NPFS is focusing heavily on community engagement and interaction. The organization has established a strong presence in parks, on street corners, and in the tent cities, where unattended children are gathering. The *Angels of Light* program provides children with food, water, and clothing, and a day camp has been created on the grounds of St. Damien—the only free pediatric hospital in Haiti—where the children are brought each day. There, NPFS staff work closely with the children to determine their situations, reunite them with their families, or integrate them into the larger NPFS family at the St. Helene orphanage in Kenscoff.

Currently, the *Angels of Light* program is caring for approximately 1,500 children, and the program relies heavily on the assistance of the *Hermanos Mayores* (Spanish for “Older Brothers and Sisters”)—NPH/NPFS graduates—many of whom have been left without homes of their own due to the earthquake. These older members of the NPFS family have played an integral role in the organization's ability to respond to relief efforts quickly and efficiently. Since the earthquake, many *Hermanos Mayores* have returned to the NPFS homes to help their younger brothers and sisters, despite their own losses.

To learn more about NPFS or the *Father Wasson Angels of Light* program and how to donate, visit www.friendsoftheorphans.org.

BACKGROUND:

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

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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