



- Ramon Espinosa/AP

Aspen-based foundation battles 'Haiti fatigue' in its fundraising

Initial support helped Mercy and Sharing ship 145 tons of relief supplies

[SCOTT CONDON](#)

THE ASPEN TIMES

ASPEN, CO COLORADO,

ASPEN — Joe Krabacher understands people are suffering a bit of what he labels “Haiti fatigue.” They are burned out on bleak news from the troubled nation and many donors are tapped out after giving financial support.

But as director of the Mercy & Sharing Foundation, which he co-founded with his wife, Susie, 16 years ago, he knows the need in Haiti is as great as ever.

Mercy and Sharing continues to operate its own orphanages, clinics and feeding centers in Haiti. Since the devastating earthquake that struck the country in January, it is also providing food and medical supplies to 40 other non-government organizations providing relief there, said Krabacher, an Aspen attorney.

The Aspen-based foundation has sent 145 tons of food and medical supplies to Haiti since January. The outpouring of support it received from donors after the disaster made it possible.

“We had a huge response particularly in the three or four weeks after the earthquake happened,” Krabacher said. In two months, the nonprofit organization collected about \$1.3 million in donations, more than in all of 2009.

While the Krabachers feel good about what has been accomplished, they also see the immensity of the need. The Haitian people will require years of assistance during the recovery from the devastating earthquake. In the short-term, the rainy season poses a particularly bitter challenge this year since so many refugees live in tent cities erected on dirt in areas where water will run.

“A second humanitarian crisis is in the making, as April begins the rainy season and if these tent cities are not relocated many will be washed away in the inevitable flooding,” Krabacher wrote in a recent newsletter from the Mercy and Sharing Foundation. “As the water drains through the rubble and remains, we expect a spike in infectious diseases.”

Not all of the bodies have been removed from the rubble of buildings that fell during the tremor. An estimated 230,000 died in the earthquake.

Krabacher is urging people not to forget about Haiti.

“I think the interest is waning. People do what they can do when it's on the front page,” he said. Joe and Susie remain grateful for whatever help people can give, and they knew from past experience that the initial interest among people to help would change. The foundation has built a core of loyal contributors.

Susie is in Haiti for the second time since the earthquake struck. It is a balancing act to determine if time is

better spent collecting contributions back in the United States or helping organize Mercy and Sharing's efforts in Haiti, Joe said.

The foundation's main facility, in the countryside north of Port-au-Prince, was unharmed in the earthquake. Mercy and Sharing cares for 117 orphans there. It has also established a medical clinic that averages 75 patients per day. It also operates feeding programs and stores supplies in a huge warehouse in the Cape Haitian area north of the capital.

Mercy and Sharing's medical clinic and office in Delmas in Port-au-Prince was 75 percent destroyed by the earthquake. A team from the United Nations is helping clear the site and a mobile medical clinic donated by the Christian Alliance will likely be located there.

The foundation's school and orphanage at Cazeau suffered extensive structure damage to buildings and infrastructure. The area is used for a feeding program.

Its school and facility for a feeding program at Cite de Soliel, the poorest area in Port-au-Prince, needs to be rebuilt.

The Krabachers' focus has been on aiding needy people so assessments are just being made on the rebuilding process. Krabacher said the preliminary estimate is between \$500,000 and \$600,000 that will be needed to rebuild Mercy and Sharing's facilities.

While the need appears overwhelming, the Krabachers are undaunted. They will continue on the mission they started in 1994, but they need continued help. Contributions can be made at www.haitichildren.org. They guarantee that 100 percent of donations are sent directly to their Haiti projects. The Krabachers and the foundation's board of directors cover the U.S. administrative costs of Mercy and Sharing.

scondon@aspentimes.com