

My Charity : Hands on in Haiti

May/June 2007 , Page 24



Tampa deal guy (and Haitian strongman) Jeffrey Leck

Jeffrey Leck, cofounder of the \$250 million private-equity firm Florida Capital Partners, based in Tampa, says the most important lesson he's learned over the years is to invest in management, not companies. He wanted to apply that same philosophy when looking for a charity to support, and after reading an article about Susan Scott Krabacher, he knew he'd found his woman.

Krabacher, a former Playboy model, runs the Mercy and Sharing Foundation, a group that cares for orphans and sick children in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. With her husband, Aspen attorney Joseph Krabacher, she operates two orphanages, three schools and a medical clinic in perhaps the most violent and destitute neighborhood in the Western hemisphere. And "operate" doesn't mean doing so via fax and e-mail. "The U.N. doesn't even want to be there," Leck says, "but Susie is."

Once, when thugs were threatening the foundation's grounds, her security guards ran out of ammunition. Krabacher walked into the slums and returned with a box of shells she'd bought from one of the city's most notorious drug lords.

Still, even such fearlessness gets you only so far. That's where Leck came in, expanding the charity's board and also writing the business plan for the construction of a vocational-training school.

"As a deal guy, I look at a lot of charitable efforts and ask, 'What's the business model?'" he says. "Susie's thought all that through but just needs help getting there." And fortunately for Leck, "help getting there" doesn't even involve riding shotgun, let alone loading one.