



**Susie Krabacher doesn't just run a foundation; whenever possible she personally cares for "her" children. Photo courtesy Mercy and Sharing Foundation.**

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children in Asia when such poverty existed just 500 miles off the Florida coast.

Krabacher went to Haiti and was immediately hooked. "I can't even tell you how deeply that changed me," she said.

Her first work was in the abandoned-infant-care unit at the only public hospital in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, where in fact "care" was a euphemism. Overwhelmed doctors and nurses had little time to do anything for the 200-or-so kids. The heads of some of the babies were actually growing around the

explained the situation to him. He told her to find property for an orphanage. They would figure out how to pay for it later.

A foundation was born with a tremendous leap of faith.

"God doesn't give you anything you're not tough enough to handle," Susie said.

**No shortage of needy**

The Krabachers purchased a \$111,500 house in Port-au-Prince and moved 47 infants into it from the hospital. Susie hired a staff and discovered, on her

**"I have a reputation. Never, even if you put a gun to my head, will I pay you a bribe."**

- Susie Krabacher

iron bars in the cribs because the children hadn't moved in so long, according to Krabacher. In some cases, live babies shared cribs with dead ones who hadn't been removed.

"I wanted to help kids in pain. I had never seen so much pain," Krabacher said.

She started visiting the infant-care unit every day, feeding the kids, applying bandages and medicine to their open wounds and simply holding them. After a month, hospital administrators ordered her to stop caring for the infants or move them elsewhere. They were used to the kids dying — not living and consuming valuable space and resources.

"I was causing the kids to live, and they didn't have any room for them," Krabacher said.

It was the first of many gut-wrenching ironies she and her husband have faced in Haiti.

Susie called Joe in Aspen and

return to Aspen, that Joe was already creating a nonprofit foundation to oversee the orphanage. He made his first trip to Haiti about a year later and understood why Susie felt compelled to act.

"There is so much need down there. It's hard to focus your attention," Joe said.

Through necessity and opportunity the Mercy and Sharing Foundation began to grow. The foundation contracted with the hospital to work with recently abandoned or orphaned infants. In many cases the infants are terminally ill. A separate orphanage, Mercy House Orphanage I, was created to handle their unique needs. Still another, Mercy House Orphanage II, was created for infants who overcame their medical conditions.

Numbers in the orphanages vary widely from month to month, with anywhere from 30 to 60 children at a given time.

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**On one of an estimated 100 visits to the morgue in Cite Soleil, Susie Krabacher cringes while looking for a child's body. When a child dies in her absence, Krabacher or one of her employees locates the body and arranges for a proper burial. "I do right by my children," she says. Photo courtesy Mercy and Sharing Foundation.**

*Why we ran the photos*

This week's edition of the Aspen Times Weekly contains two unusually graphic photos — one of a child with a spinal deformity, and another of a Haitian morgue. Anticipating questions and complaints, we decided to explain our reasoning for running the pictures.

The horrific reality of life in Haiti is part of any story about Susie and Joe Krabacher's efforts, and in many ways photos can tell the tale better than words. Thousands of Haitians suffer from deformities and diseases brought on by hunger, malnutrition and poor health care. One of our photos shows a child with spina bifi-da, an all-too-common malady.

When these unfortunates die, as many do, they're typically thrown into morgues that look to American eyes like meat lockers; from there, most are buried in mass graves.

We are publishing a picture of such a morgue. Susie Krabacher has visited this hellish place many times, to retrieve the bodies of children she was not able to save. This is not a gratuitously graphic photo of an out-of-the-ordinary incident or photo-op. We think it's a reflection of everyday life (or death) in Haiti, and a compelling illustration of Krabacher's dedication and courage.

*Human Development*

	Haiti	Mexico	United States
Life expectancy at birth (years) 2001	49.1	73.1	76.9
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) 2001	79	24	7
Adult literacy rate (% age 15 and above) 2001	50.8	91.4	99
Undernourished people (as % of total population) 1998/2000	50	5	—
Population with access to an improved water source (% Rural) 2000	45	69	100
Population with access to an improved water source (% Urban) 2000	49	95	100