

## GIVING FROM THE HEART

### As donations for Haiti showed, northwest Ohioans respond to need

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For all the talk about the selfishness pervading today's me-first society, April Kellogg has more than 3 million arguments to the contrary.

That's the value in dollars of supplies and services that have been donated so far, mostly by people in northwest Ohio, to Haitian-relief efforts through ISOH/IMPACT, a Perrysburg-based charity for which Ms. Kellogg is a volunteer.

"People living in this area have always responded really well to those in need," she said. "Americans give, and it's not just the wealthy. It's more of the general population. We have a lot of donations: \$10 checks, \$25 checks, \$50 checks. And those add up."

Soon after the January earthquake devastated Haiti, drop-off sites for supplies popped up around town. Schools and churches held collection drives. A strip club even got in on the action with a fund-raiser.

Nationally, too, Americans are giving, giving, and giving some more. Contributions across the country have added up to about \$1 billion, said Sandra Miniutti, vice president of New Jersey-based Charity Navigator, which rates the financial health of charities.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. Americans gave \$2 billion in the wake of the 2004 Indonesian tsunami and \$6.5 billion after Hurricane Katrina.

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"We tend to be the most generous [in the world], in part because of the way our taxes are structured," Ms. Miniutti said.

There's an emotional side to it too, of course. Just ask Terry Gerken, an ISOH/IMPACT board member who was part of a recent team that went to Haiti. There he saw "utter chaos" — buildings flattened like pancakes, talk of bodies entombed.

"I was affected by the absolute despair of the Haitians losing family members and loved ones," the Perrysburg Township man said. "There wasn't a family that wasn't affected."

Images of this devastation in the media drive many people to donate.

"I think particularly when they can show pictures, it's very compelling for people," said Daniel Borochoff, president of the American Institute of Philanthropy in Chicago. "It's a very emotional sort of reaction..."

The problem, he continued, is that people often forget about the long-term rebuilding efforts that follow.

But every little bit helps, both for those in need and for those making the contribution.

"I think there really is an inherent need in each of us that wants to give from the heart," said Peggy Holewinski, financial development officer of the American Red Cross Greater Toledo Area Chapter. "By writing a check, they know they've made a small impact on a big problem."

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Students play catch during a Hoops 4 Haiti fund-raiser at Bennett Venture Academy in Toledo. (THE BLADE/LORI KING)