

OBI PARTNERS WITH LSU AGCENTER TO HELP CRAB FISHERMEN IN LOUISIANA

Unique Aquaculture Program Based On Soft-Shell Crabs Will Provide Crabbers With Approximately \$14,000 Increased Annual Income

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (June 11, 2010) -- Operation Blessing International (OBI), the 7th largest international charity, is working in partnership with LSU AgCenter/Louisiana Sea Grant Program and the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board (LSPMB) to help crab fishermen and their families still reeling from Hurricane Katrina but also now hit hard by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

With new government estimates putting the oil spill at between 12,000 and 19,000 barrels a day, the U.S. government has declared a "fishery disaster" in Louisiana and surrounding states. Louisiana's \$2.4 billion seafood industry supplies roughly 40 percent of the domestic seafood supply and employs over 27,000 people. The state is the second-largest domestic seafood harvester and the top provider of shrimp, oysters, crawfish and crabs. On Friday, NOAA increased the area closed to fishing in the Gulf of Mexico by 20% to 60,683 square miles.

The OBI-LSU AgCenter project is based on a unique soft-shell crab shedding system developed by Louisiana Sea Grant and implemented by LSU after Hurricane Katrina as part of their recovery work. The system enables crab fishermen to reserve certain hard-shell crabs just before they shed (called Busters) and keep them in holding tanks until they do shed and can then be sold as soft-shell crabs. The system consists of a series of shallow tanks, PVC piping and a water pump that circulates salt water over the crabs in the tanks.

Soft-shell crabs typically sell for more than twice as much as hard-shell crabs, a result of their being much more difficult and unpredictable to harvest.

OBI is providing the initial funding for 25 soft-shell crab shedding sets. One set of tanks will generally yield 600 dozen soft crabs in a season, averaging 10 to 12 dozen per week with peaks as high as 36 dozen per week. Each set is expected to increase each family's income by approximately \$14,000 annually, with all 25 sets adding up to a combined \$350,000 in the first year alone.

With proper maintenance, each system is expected to operate for 7 to 10 years before minor replacement parts may be needed.

Bill Horan, president of OBI, said, "Many of the fishermen and their families in the Gulf still have not recovered from the loss of income and the struggle after Hurricane Katrina. Now, the oil spill has only made things worse for them. These soft-shell crab systems will help these families not only increase their incomes today, but also over the long-term."

Anyone wishing to donate to this project may do so at www.ob.org. 100% of all donated funds

will go directly to purchasing additional sets for families. Any donated amount is welcome. The sets, which cost OBI approximately \$2,000 each, are being manufactured in Westwego, Louisiana, thus helping the local economy further.

ABOUT OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL:

Operation Blessing International (OBI) is one of the largest charities in America, providing strategic disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, clean water and community development in 22 countries around the world on a daily basis. In 2009, OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the fifth year in a row, a feat that only 4% of rated charities have ever achieved. Forbes, which currently ranks OBI as one of "America's 200 Largest Charities" as well as one of "America's Most Efficient Charities," awarded OBI a perfect 100% rating in fundraising efficiency and 99% efficiency in charitable commitment. Additionally, the Chronicle of Philanthropy currently ranks OBI as the 39th largest charity and the 7th largest international charity.

In 2009, OBI responded to 43 disasters. Most recently, OBI mobilized teams and funded major relief and recovery efforts in Haiti, Italy, Myanmar, the Sichuan Province of China, Rift Valley in Kenya, Bangladesh, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the Darfur region of Sudan, Pakistan, Somalia, India, Indonesia, Mozambique and the Philippines. OBI has also made headlines as a first responder to U.S. hurricanes, floods and tornadoes as well as the tsunami disaster in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand. In addition to directing major disaster relief efforts, OBI has often filled the role of logistical arm to organizations including the International Red Cross, the Salvation Army, UNICEF and the United Nations World Food Program.

Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 215 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$2.1 billion to date.