

TINY FISH FROM MISSISSIPPI TO DEPART FOR HAITI EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROJECT THIS FRIDAY, SEPT. 10

Anti-Malaria Project Part of Long-Term Humanitarian Program By Operation Blessing International

TCHULA, MS (SEPTEMBER 8, 2010) -- This Friday, September 10, some 2,000 tiny fish in Mississippi will be traveling to Haiti to play an integral role in a large earthquake relief project by the international humanitarian organization, Operation Blessing International (OBI).

The fish, tiny minnows called Gambusia, eat many times their body weight in mosquito eggs and larvae and are used as a natural, "green" mosquito deterrent in many countries around the world. OBI used them extensively in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. There, OBI staff and volunteers worked with local and state authorities to raise and stock these native, mosquito-eating minnows in thousands of stagnant swimming pools around the city. As a result of this project, OBI was credited by the city of New Orleans as having averted an outbreak of West Nile Virus.

Haiti marks the last stand of malaria in the western hemisphere – it remains the only country where the disease is still an epidemic. To combat this and improve the health of millions, OBI has launched a long-term humanitarian project called TEACH A NATION TO FISH. The three-part project includes unleashing the mosquito-eating Gambusia fish in Haiti's infested waterways, plus running a microenterprise tilapia farming project and stocking food-fish back into the country's depleted lakes and reservoirs.

The Gambusia to be used in Haiti are currently being raised in Tchula by Thompson Fish Hatchery (4160 Bee Lake Rd). Early Friday morning, hatchery staff will put the fish into special aerated containers and the fish will be driven to the airport in Yazoo, MS. A team leader from OBI will arrive from the organization's Virginia Beach headquarters, in a private plane owned by a donor to the charity, at roughly 11am and meet the fish. They will then fly from Yazoo to Fort Pierce, Florida, spend the night and then depart for Port-au-Prince early Saturday morning. A partner charity, Missionary Flights International, has agreed to fly the fish the rest of the way. The fish will arrive in Port-au-Prince on Saturday at roughly noon.

In Haiti, OBI is working in partnership with Dr. Valentine Abe, recently named by *Time Magazine* as one of the *Top 100 Most Influential People In The World* for a fish-farming project he runs. Together, they have built a new fish hatchery where the Gambusia will be put into rearing tanks. In a very short time, the 2,000 fish will multiply to hundreds of thousands. When enough fish are available, OBI staff, working in concert with the Haiti Department of Agriculture, will then stock the fish into mosquito-infested waters around the country. Once in the waters, the fish will multiply even more, resulting in millions of Gambusia.

OBI has been working in Haiti on HIV/AIDS initiatives for more than 5 years. During 2009, OBI expanded their efforts in Haiti to also focus on projects with Partners in Health (PIH) and the Haiti Ministry of Health. Those efforts include providing potable water systems for PIH hospitals, launching a nationwide anti-parasite initiative to treat all school-age children and partnering in an innovative microenterprise fish farm project to help some of Haiti's most impoverished families.

When the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck, OBI mobilized its international disaster relief teams and provided emergency aid to tens of thousands of Haitians in the most devastated areas. Included in the relief efforts, OBI donated over 120 tons of medicine to the Haitian Ministry of Health, ran a medical clinic inside the Sylvio Cator Soccer Stadium where displaced people had set up a camp, and deployed 30 water purification plants throughout Port-au-Prince – including in National Stadium and in General Hospital, the largest hospital in Haiti -- that are each capable of providing some 10,000 gallons of safe water daily. In the first month of the disaster, OBI distributed 1702 pallets of emergency supplies, food, water and medication with total weight of 2,416,559 lbs (1208 tons). OBI's ongoing efforts include support of numerous schools, orphanages and tent camps with food, water and relief supplies, in addition to establishing Zanmi Beni, a home for disabled orphans and abandoned children in partnership with Zanmi Lasante (PIH).

For more information on TEACH A NATION TO FISH or other OBI humanitarian efforts in Haiti or around the world, please log on to www.ob.org.

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 23 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.

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.

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