

Operation Blessing Intl. Providing 40 Boats To Japanese Fishermen Idled Since Quake-Tsunami

-- Delivery set for Sept. 4th --

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (Sept. 1, 2011) – Japanese fishermen whose way-of-life was severely impacted following the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami, are getting help from the American humanitarian organization, Operation Blessing International (OBI), who will deliver 40 fishing boats to local fishermen in Hikado Fishing Harbor (Kessenuma, Japan) who have been out of work since the disaster.

The boat delivery is the first of what could be a donation of hundreds of boats by OBI in the coming weeks to several months.

When the 8.9 magnitude earthquake struck, the most powerful known to hit the island nation and one of the five most powerful ever since modern day record-keeping began, Japan's fishing industry was nearly decimated as thousands of boats and entire seaweed and shellfish cultivation operations were destroyed.

"The earthquake wiped out the means of making a living for thousands of traditional seaweed, shellfish, and conventional fishing families," said OBI president Bill Horan. "Many of the boat builders were also destroyed, so there is currently an extended waiting time for new boats to be built – up to a year. That is simply too long of a wait for these hard-working fishermen, so we combed the country and found good used boats and motors that met our standards. Come Sept. 4 we will deliver 40 boats and motors to selected families, all with children," said Horan.

But this is just the first step. Horan said he found a boat builder in the U.S.A. who specializes in workboats, and it is very likely that OBI will be able to place an order for at least 20 boats, possibly more.

"If this pilot project works, we'll be in a position to offer our donors the opportunity to adopt boats for Japanese fishermen and their families," Horan said.

One of the first relief organizations to arrive, hours after the earthquake struck, OBI delivered tons of food, water and kerosene to survivors in devastated areas. In addition, the charity delivered industrial grade generators, refrigerators and washing machines to the isolated Urato Islands lying off the coast of Miyagi.

More recently, the charity has focused on helping fishing communities that lost homes, workplaces, boats, fishing equipment, nets, oyster and seaweed cultivation apparatus to the tsunami. In one project, OBI provided laptop computers to the JF Miyagi Fisheries Cooperative, for the fishermen to reach out to the nation via their own Web page. Since the project's launch, the cooperative has received pre-orders worth several million dollars for sea produce to be delivered when the industry is revitalized.

In another ongoing project, OBI provided fishermen on the Urato Islands with oyster

and seaweed cultivation equipment and gill nets. The gill net fishermen are already producing good catches of flatfish and other varieties that are being sold at the re-opened Shiogama Fish Market, one of four major fishing ports on the Miyagi Coast, and the only port able to reopen since the earthquake.

On June 1, OBI opened its Tohoku Operations Center in the town of Tomiya, just north of Sendai, strategically located to provide quick access for OBI teams reaching out to various parts of the disaster zone. From April through August, Operation Blessing conducted eyeglass clinics in 18 locations along the coast of Miyagi and Iwate Prefecture providing free eye exams and prescription glasses to almost 2,000 survivors living in shelters and temporary housing. This unique program provides glasses to survivors who lost their glasses to the tsunami. To date, the organization has provided assistance to disaster victims in Shiogama, Urato Islands (Katsurajima, Nonoshima, Sabusawa), Ishinomaki, Onagawa, Ogatsu, Tome, Minami Sanriku, Oya, Motoyoshi, Kessenuma, Rikuzentakata, and Otsuchi.

For more information log on to www.ob.org or, in Japanese, www.objapan.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. OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the 7th year in a row (2011), a feat that only 2% of rated charities have ever achieved. In November 2010, Forbes named OBI as the 6th most efficient charity in America. Additionally, the Chronicle of Philanthropy currently ranks OBI as the 23rd largest charity and the 6th largest international charity. Founded in 1978, Operation Blessing International has touched the lives of more than 235 million people in more than 105 countries and 50 states, providing goods and services valued at over \$2.7 billion to date.

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