

RELIEF ORGANIZATION BLASTS FALSE REPORT ON ITS HAITI MOSQUITO CONTROL PROGRAM

Operation Blessing Did Not Import *Gambusia Holbrooki* Fish Into Haiti; Haitian Government Allowed Group to use *Gambusia Affinis*

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (April 26, 2011) – A widely circulating blog containing false and erroneous information prompted Bill Horan, president of the charitable relief organization Operation Blessing International (OBI), to issue the following statement regarding its relief effort and its mosquito control program in Haiti:

“There is false and misleading information currently circulating on the Internet, and it is important to correct and set the record straight. Operation Blessing International did NOT bring gambusia holbrooki fish into Haiti. As we have done with every mosquito control project we undertake, we painstakingly researched the presence of different species of gambusia in Haiti’s waters. We do this to ensure that only fish already present are introduced. OBI did this research in Haiti and never introduced gambusia holbrooki as is being incorrectly reported,” said Horan.

Moreover, Horan noted that OBI’s partner on the project is Dr. Val Abe, an esteemed Haitian aquaculture expert, founder of the Haitian charity Caribbean Harvest, and one of Time Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People 2010.

“Dr. Abe specifically requested gambusia affinis, since his research showed that the affinis had previously been introduced into Haiti’s waters and also because they are the most effective at mosquito control,” Horan said.

Furthermore, both Haiti’s Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment spent over a year thoroughly vetting the charitable relief organization’s plan to bring gambusia affinis into Haiti. Both Ministries approved the plan in writing, giving OBI full permission to import the gambusia affinis.

“OBI’s intention is to only release the fish into mosquito-infested water that will completely dry out in the warm weather, such as drainage canals, large puddles and standing water around tent camps. OBI has no plan to distribute the fish into open water systems such as rivers and lakes,” Horan said.

Operation Blessing International’s mosquito fish program in Haiti is modeled after its successful “Bug Busters” program in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. Beginning in 2006, OBI staff and volunteers worked with local and federal authorities to raise and stock gambusia 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. In fact, a portion of OBI’s program in New Orleans is ongoing, five years after Katrina, now being managed by The City of New Orleans Mosquito Control.

Steve Sackett, retired City of New Orleans entomologist and marine biologist for the State of Louisiana said, “New Orleans came to a standstill after Hurricane Katrina. Operation Blessing came in, offered to help with mosquito control using an environmentally friendly approach, and knocked the ball out of the park with its ‘Bug Busters’ program.”

Horan concludes; “The fact is gambusia affinis are the most effective in controlling mosquitoes and are used in many countries around the world to help relieve human pain and suffering from malaria and other diseases on a large scale, which speaks directly to the mission of Operation Blessing International.”

For more information please visit 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. OBI was awarded Charity Navigator's coveted 4 star rating for sound fiscal management for the fifth year in a row (2009), a feat that only 4% 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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