

Alternative Gifts International is a non-profit organization that inspires support for humanitarian and environmental causes. We offer donors the option to designate charitable gifts through carefully selected agencies in the name of their relatives, friends and associates.



Alternative Gift Markets, Inc.®
alternativegifts.org — 800 842 2243

Alternative Gifts International

February - June 2010 Newsletter

As we go to press...

January 13, 2010

I am reminded of Robert McAfee Brown's book *The Pseudonyms of God* that I read years back. Wars and catastrophic natural disasters can be ways of bringing the awareness of God's love to the world. In such events, those who are hurting can witness the love that is designed to be shared by humans for each other. Stories of heroism, generosity and selflessness will become part of the daily news, along with the stories of suffering and loss. We must grieve with those who are hurting, but in that process, we can become enriched by knowing that there are many ways that we can also help.

Prayer, financial gifts, rallying small groups to raise funds, volunteering—but getting good advice first from those who are accustomed to work in disasters. What is NOT usually needed in most disasters are unsolicited collections of donated used clothing, furniture or food items which are shipped independently to the disaster location. Those often cause more work for the volunteers who are working in the area. They will generally have the supplies that are most needed, or have access to them through the larger humanitarian aid organizations. Other items may be needed or used later in recovery stages, but not in the initial phases of disaster response.

Below is part of a note from MADRE, one of our partner agencies that works in Haiti:

The worst earthquake in 200 years struck Haiti yesterday, causing catastrophic destruction in the hemisphere's poorest country. The quake struck near capital of Port-au-Prince, the most densely populated part of Haiti.

MADRE has activated an emergency response through our partner organization, Zamni lasante Clinic. The doctors, nurses

AGI will use ALL new funds received for Project 39 between Jan 12 and Feb 28, 2010 for the Haiti Earthquake disaster response. We will work to distribute the funds where they are needed most.

and community health workers there are working to get medical assistance and supplies to areas that have been hardest hit.

The most urgent needs right now are bandages, broad-spectrum antibiotics and other medical supplies, as well as water tablets to prevent cholera outbreaks.

We know how to get help to survivors, but we need your generosity to purchase emergency supplies.

MADRE has worked in Haiti for many years, supporting community-based organizations in times of disaster. Our partners are expert at reaching those in crisis and stretching resources to meet the urgent needs facing Haitian women and families right now.

The situation is catastrophic and immediate action is key to saving lives. AGI's **Project 39**, "Meeting Global Needs," includes the discretionary funds we can access for international disasters. AGI will use all new funds received between Jan 12 and February 28, 2010, for the Haiti Earthquake disaster response. We will work with and through our partner agencies in Haiti to distribute the funds where they are needed most, and by local people who are most knowledgeable of the needs in each area. <

Join us on the web!

Visit us on the web at alternativegifts.org and also join us Facebook, Twitter and our brand new blog: www.alternativegifts.org/blog

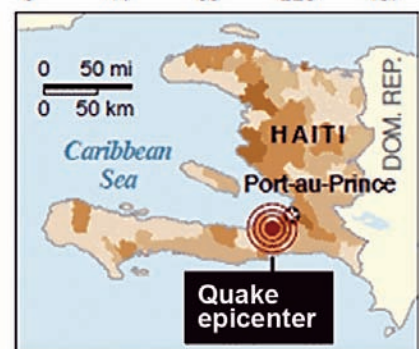
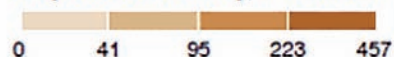
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Population density, in thousands



Map detail of the earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince on January 12, 2010.

Photo:
www.msnbc.com

pledge the Millennium Goals

Each monthly calendar represents a **United Nations Millennium Development Goal** (UNMDG), which AGI is highlighting in our annual catalog. For more information, see www.un.org/millenniumgoals. As we continue to focus on these goals, here are some suggestions for your pledge consideration during these upcoming months.



FEBRUARY – Promoting Gender Equality

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, what better gift could we give every woman we know than "respect?" So many world cultures have used laws and religion to place women in inferior positions that the UN recognizes this issue as a major developmental impediment. Such discrimination ranges from honor killings to jobs, education and exclusion of voting or inheritance rights. Your choice of **Project 12** can connect women in developed countries with those who are struggling for freedom and a voice in urban or rural regions. **Project 14** concentrates on building cooperatives for women farmers who do 80% of the work but receive little government agricultural assistance, simply because of their gender.



MARCH – AGI's work in Haiti

In the summer of 2007, AGI was the initiator of a "movement" Haitians to restore the environment of their island. We continue to provide administrative support to this successful coalition that now works in all 10 departments of the country. They share knowledge of best practices, advocate methods to find alternatives to charcoal that is the preferred fuel for cooking & heating, and build collaborative projects that can benefit multiple communities. See **Project 34, 36 or 37**.

> call us to get a calendar poster for this newsletter as a unique reminder to keep our gifts in mind for birthdays, holidays and other special occasions!



APRIL – Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

While planning for Earth Day 2010, please consider presenting an Alternative Gift Market using AGI **Projects 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33**.



MAY – Improving Maternal Health

Mother's Day is the very best time to recognize the gift of life. Choose between **Projects 20, 21 or 22**. Graduation time is also appropriate to promote the education **Projects 7, 8 or 9**.



JUNE – Supporting AGI's Global Needs Fund

Project 39 is used "where needed most" to supplement the lower funded projects at the end of the fiscal year (June 30). If a major disaster occurs, we would also use this fund to give a single donation to an agency that is working in the disaster stricken area.

Some churches and parochial schools have been very successful in using AGI's projects for Lenten Studies. By choosing five or six projects along with a religion/Bible study and dedicating the weekly offering to those specific projects, several schools (and their faculty) have raised between \$2,000 and \$8,000 toward humanitarian and environmental work around the world. What better way to learn the value of sacrifice and give of oneself?

AGENCY HIGHLIGHT

International Urban Cities: Where 'dumpster diving' is not sitcom humor

In January our partner agency, HANDS, sent an e-blast about the NY City opening of "Garbage Dreams". It is a new movie that portrays the reality of urban poverty in the city of Cairo, Egypt. HANDS (Hands Along the Nile Development Services) is currently featured in our *Shopping List for the World* in project 10. Formerly, when I heard the term 'dumpster diving' I usually conjured the image of witty interchange from a Friends TV episode, or thought of the irony of college students furnishing their apartments from the curb side discards in the wealthy suburbs. Not so anymore.

Actually, AGI's catalog and web site currently features Project 36, **Changing Trash to Cash**, that shows the benefits that urban entrepreneurs receive and provide by recycling trash. Those of us who have weekly trash pick-ups taken to the well-maintained and monitored landfill really have no idea of what people face who live in cities with NO municipal services for trash removal.

I hope that "Garbage Dreams" makes it to the Oscar awards, for which it is nominated. If it does, that will help us all have a better perspective of their challenges. Please remind your friends and neighbors to see it, and consider sending a gift to AGI's **Changing Trash to Cash** project to help those who need our support. <

when will the FUTURE bring HOPE?

As I write this on a blustery January day, the daily news media seems intent on getting me to believe that good times are just around the corner. However, we who have been through economic downturns, recessions, depressions, know that it takes more than a few rising financial indicators to recover from the deep wounds of major surgery like our world has experienced in the past 18 months. Here in Wichita, we know the aircraft industry sometimes lags about a year behind the retail sector in its losses, and then its recoveries. After the East and West Coasts regain their strength, there are still thousands of unemployed in the food pantry lines here.

This year, charitable organizations are experiencing a similar after-shock. Even with hope that comes with Spring and Eastertide, we will, no doubt be having to count our blessings in ways other than by watching the revenue markers rise to the proposed budget that we optimistically projected last summer. Our Alternative Gift Market Coordinators' remittance checks and reports arrive, but nearly all with apologies that they could not generate as many dollars as in previous years. We will no doubt be looking at layoffs and cut-backs—and possibly a third year of deficit operating budgets.

So, what do we do now? Fire all the executives? There is a saying that trying the same thing over and over again without

success is the definition of insanity. Innovative fund raising or grant-writing is no longer a term that is well received. Most people want to stay with what is tried and true. But in times like these, entrepreneurs—and that includes social entrepreneurs—are the ones who come out with some rewards for the risks they have taken. AGI is a social entrepreneur. We have been on the edge of humanitarian and environmental fund raising and education. We have taken risks.

I would like to present a challenge and a promise to AGI supporters:

Without sending another request by mail for your support, would you please help us meet our operations budget? Instead of, or in addition to your Lenten, Easter, Earth Day, Mother's Day and Graduation Day gifts, please include a gift to AGI's mission, equal to at least 10 or 20% of the gifts you are sending to others. Better yet—send it right now, as soon as you read this!

Please watch for the Annual Report that you will be receiving by the emergence of Spring...and the flowers that are produced from the bulbs that laid dormant all winter long. Consider how your undesignated gift can also be a sign of Spring and new hope. If you value what Alternative Gifts International has offered to you and your gift recipients, now is the best time for you to tell us so! <

Social entrepreneurs like AGI are ones who, over time, come out with some rewards for the risks they have taken.

YES! *I want to help with an unrestricted donation...*

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____ APT _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

Visa or Mastercard ONLY:

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My donation amount \$ _____

Check here to designate your donation to the disaster fund for Haiti.

Signature: _____ Check # _____

- Make checks payable to: Alternative Gifts International
- AGI donations are tax deductible

Mail to: Alternative Gifts International. PO Box 3810. Wichita, Kansas 67201-3810

OUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

We're changing our ways...to save more paper, printing and postage costs!

Beginning with the Summer Newsletter 2010, we will reduce the number of copies we print and mail and we need your help. If you read and enjoy receiving our newsletter, please take a moment to tell us you want to continue receiving it:

- * mail a reply (with your order) or separately to:
PO Box 3810, Wichita, KS 67201-3810
- * call us toll-free at 800.842.2243
- * fax us a note at 316.262.1292
- * email us at agi@alternativegifts.org
- * respond to the survey on our website: alternativegifts.org
- * send us a comment on our new blog:
www.alternativegifts.org/blog

If you DO NOT want to receive this newsletter in print, BUT you want an email version sent, please email us from your preferred email address to agi@alternativegifts.org.

Just a Reminder...



The gifts featured in AGI's 2009-2010 catalog *My Shopping List for the World* are good until June 30.

These gifts can be given for Mother's Day, Earth Day, graduations, birthdays and even weddings!

Call or e-mail us today to request up to **5 FREE** catalogs. Leave them at the office, at your church, in the doctor's or dentist's office and at your school.

WIN \$150 CASH!

Show off your creative skills! Enter your greeting card design in our contest and it may be chosen as one of the holiday cards for Alternative Gifts International!

This winning design will be featured in AGI's catalog, *My Shopping List for the World*, and web site. The designer will also receive \$150 cash!

For entry form and official rules, go to:
www.alternativegifts.org

CONTEST ENDS: **APRIL 1, 2010**



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PHOTO CREDITS

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NOTE TO OUR READERS:

If you are receiving more than one newsletter or would like to receive the electronic version only, please let us know.