

## Tsunami Relief

The world has been shocked and grieves in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami. The death toll this week in Sri Lanka jumped by more than 7,000, bringing the total there to 38,195 and taking the overall number killed in the disaster beyond 175,000. The final count, some estimates predict, will exceed 270,000. It is startling and frightening to realize how quick and deadly was the force of the water.

This natural disaster is a grim reminder of the value of human life. It is a gift that we too often take for granted.

Associates of Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home understand this truth, for they have dedicated their lives to serving our residents and contributing to the quality of their existence on this planet. It is natural, then, for them to be particularly moved at the drama that is being played out in these Indian Ocean nations. Inquiries have been received here at our corporate offices about what can be done for surviving family members. Many people have their own ideas and preferences about how their money and aid should be directed, so we are not attempting one drive -- as we did with the hurricane victims in Florida -- to offer help. It is best, we believe, for the centers and individual associates to contribute as they choose to the agency they prefer.

Information about donations is available on numerous websites, including [www.usafreedomcorps.gov](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov). That is the location designated by President George Bush in announcing his appointment of former Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton to raise funds for the tsunami relief. That website has a list of recommended agencies through which money can be given.

It includes Samaritan's Purse, a familiar name to Life Care, since this Christian world relief organization conducts the annual Operation Christmas Child project in which Life Care participates. Samaritan's Purse was also mentioned by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist from Tennessee -- in an appearance on Larry King Live -- as one of a handful of organizations that he had personal knowledge of and would recommend.

Samaritan's Purse has advised that a Boeing 747 cargo jet loaded with emergency aid from Samaritan's Purse left Charlotte, N.C., on Monday to go to Indonesia. The jet carried a helicopter that will enable Samaritan's Purse to fly relief workers and supplies into parts of Indonesia that have been difficult to reach since Dec. 26. In addition to the helicopter, which was previously used to set up medical clinics in the mountains of Honduras following Hurricane Mitch, Samaritan's Purse also has a light utility plane en route to Indonesia to assist in delivering critically needed aid.

(more)

"Many lives are at stake, and we need to get more air support there as soon as possible," said Samaritan's Purse President Franklin Graham.

Also aboard the jet:

- Fifteen large filtration units capable of providing clean water for about 50,000 people per day.
- About 1,400 rolls of reinforced plastic to build temporary housing for more than 8,000 families.
- Fifteen tons of blankets -- enough for 6,000 people.
- Cartons of basic medical supplies.
- Generators to support flight operations and provide emergency power in areas without electricity.

Samaritan's Purse is already furnishing shelter materials and rebuilding kits to surviving families in the vicinity of Indonesia's "ground zero" -- Meulaboh, the city closest to the epicenter of the earthquake that caused the tsunami. Its teams in Sri Lanka and Indonesia are distributing millions of water-purification packets that can clean dirty water, making it drinkable and preventing the spread of disease. In Sri Lanka, it is providing "family survival kits" in the hard-hit town of Kalmunai, as well as rolls of reinforced plastic to provide shelter for more than 4,000 families.

We are pleased to see our Operation Christmas Child partner in the forefront of those agencies quickly reacting to provide assistance -- and hope -- to those who are suffering. If you would like more information on Samaritan's Purse, and wish to donate through that agency, visit its website at [www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org) or call 1-800-567-8183.

--Beecher Hunter