



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Operation Hope for Haiti and World Vision continue partnership in Haiti reconstruction as they announce \$400,000 committed to Center of Hope and additional fundraising efforts by 300 Team World Vision runners at the ING Miami race weekend**

**MIAMI**— Marking one year since the devastating earthquake in Haiti, Operation Hope for Haiti and World Vision announced a commitment for additional funding to construct the first ‘Center of Hope,’ aimed at delivering ongoing education and support to the people of Haiti.

The Center of Hope, set to break ground next month, will be built in the city of Hinche, located in the Central Plateau, as a platform to further develop economic hubs outside of Port-au-Prince. It will provide life-changing programs aimed at improving education, income and community capacity for self-reliance. The Center will also serve as a bridge to expertise and engagement from the international community.

When Haiti was rocked by the horrific earthquake last January, a voluntary group of civic and business leaders in Miami came together in partnership with World Vision to respond, raising over \$500,000 for World Vision’s relief and recover efforts, and putting together kitchen kits, hygiene packs and other supplies for used by Haitian children in World Vision’s Child Friendly Spaces.

On the one year anniversary of quake, this group including United Way of Miami-Dade, City of Miami Fire & Rescue, Miami Dade College, Miami Dade County Public School District, Mission 500, American Express, Cardinal Health, Flagler Development, JP Morgan Chase, LAN Airlines, McKesson, MIQ Logistics, Royal Caribbean, Target, Wal-Mart and Waste Management gathered in remembrance and reaffirmed their commitment to provide sustained support to rebuilding efforts.

Long-time World Vision supporters and Operation Hope for Haiti Chairperson, Julie Grimes and Pierre Heafey, owners of the Hilton Bentley Hotel – Miami, announced their commitment of a charitable gift of \$400,000 towards the development of the Center of Hope. “Working together in partnership with World Vision, our community can make an intentional, strategic difference in one of Haiti’s most deeply impoverished yet most important rural areas, said Julie Grimes, Chairperson Operation Hope for Haiti. Together we can build this vital bridge to new beginnings and help lift our neighbors from despair. Please join us in solidarity and say to the people of Haiti, “we are with you”.

Joining in the remembrance event, were the South Florida Urban Search and Rescue Team, who were first responders in freeing survivors from the rubble in Haiti. Chief Maurice Kemp, of City of Miami Fire-Rescue, commended this unit and confirmed their partnership with World Vision – Operation Hope for Haiti. Beyond their heroic rescue efforts, Chief Kemp and his team have raised money for World Vision relief efforts, volunteered in kit builds for Haiti and have run for Haiti with Team World Vision in the ING Miami Marathon.

Those that attended the gathering, will make up one of the largest groups among the 300 runners who will participate in the January 30<sup>th</sup> ING Miami Marathon and “Run for Haiti” with Team World Vision. Among these devoted runners is Miami firefighter, Jeff Fitzgerald, who was also a first responder in Haiti, just after the quake struck. During the two weeks he spent on the ground, Fitzgerald and his rescue team were able to rescue seven survivors from the rubble, work with a local orphanage and help bring hope to a country in absolute distress.

**“There was shock on the faces of the people of Haiti, as their infrastructure appeared non-existent,” said Fitzgerald. “People slept on the streets, afraid that another aftershock might collapse remaining buildings on top of them,” he added.** Since last years’ race, Fitzgerald has recruited 15 fellow fire-fighters to run with Team World Vision.

“This is a marathon, not a sprint, and Operation Hope for Haiti is a key partner in helping us run this marathon,” said World Vision President Richard Stearns. “Today, we applaud the community of Miami who stand as a role model for how all cities could come together in a collective show of compassionate support and unflinching commitment to help their neighbors in Haiti”

World Vision has worked for more than 30 years in Haiti, and is committed to ongoing quake response efforts in the upcoming year including building additional transitional shelters, providing livelihood and job opportunities, and focusing on the unique needs of children.

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**World Vision** is a Christian relief and development organization dedicated to helping children and their communities worldwide reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty. For more information please visit [www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org).

**Operation Hope for Haiti** is a voluntary group of business and community leaders who are unified in their commitment and passion to help Haiti. They partner with World Vision to make an intentional, strategic difference.

