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# BAY AREA REPORTER

Issue: Vol. 40 / No. 10 / 11 March 2010

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## LGBTs act locally to help people in Haiti

**NEW**

by Seth Hemmelgarn

Published 01/21/2010

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Since a magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit Haiti last week, LGBTs in San Francisco have been working to raise thousands of dollars to help.

The quake, which struck Tuesday, January 12, has killed an estimated 200,000 people. On Monday, January 18, The *Advocate* reported on its Web site that 14 men involved with SEROVie, a Haitian group serving gay and transgender people with HIV, were among the dead.

[After the print edition of the paper went to press, Steeve Laguerre, executive director of SEROVie e-mailed the *B.A.R.* that the group did lose 14 members and that "lots of LGBT community members that we are serving have lost clothes and house."

"Some in despair want to leave the capital," he added.]

Additionally, the State Department confirmed that Flo McGarrell, 35, a transgender artist, also was among the dead. McGarrell, originally from Vermont, had spent time in San Francisco when he worked as art director and producer on the film, *Maggots and Men*. According to reports from NECN.com, his body was found in a collapsed building about 20 miles outside Port-au-Pri. He had recently returned to Haiti, his home since 2008, after spending the holidays with family in Newbury, Vermont. McGarrell originally was from Umbria, Italy.



Deco Lounge waiter Erick Lopez garnered another \$100 for the victims of the recent Haitian earthquake by taking off his shirt during a night of comedy at "Funny Mondays" at Deco Lounge. Other comics who performed included Natasha Muse, Lisa Geduldig, Yayne Abeba, Casey Ley, host Ton Koester, and Marga Gomez (not pictured). A total of nearly \$1,500 was raised in the one evening, which will be added to the funds raised in another night of comedy on January 25. Photo: Rick Gerharter

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Looking to help the people of Haiti, Rainbow World Fund, a San Francisco-based, LGBT humanitarian aid group, had raised nearly \$85,000, as of Tuesday, January 19, according to Jeff Cotter, the organization's executive director.

RWF is not new to Haiti. Since 2004, it has supported ongoing projects in the impoverished country focusing on developing safe drinking water access and improving nutrition.

Cotter said the \$85,000 includes a \$35,000 check his group sent to CARE, the fund's long-term disaster relief partner, before the quake struck.

He said that money is earmarked for the water project, as well as the Haiti Urban Garden Project, which seeks to improve the food supply and income-earning potential for struggling families in the region.

"There's an ongoing need to keep all those programs going, because they're providing life-sustaining needs," said Cotter.

The money RWF is raising now will be used for direct emergency aid, such as food and blankets.

"It's important for everyone to realize recovery for Haiti is a long-term project, and we would really encourage people to consider developing an ongoing partnership or relationship with Haiti as a donor to support these wonderful people in rebuilding their lives ...," said Cotter

Others have been raising money in support of RWF's efforts.

On Monday night, January 18, a stand-up comedy night at the Deco Lounge dubbed "Funny Mondays" raised at least \$1,500, according to Tony Koester, the comedian who hosted the event. Local out comedian Marga Gomez headlined the fundraiser.

Koester said he was "thrilled" with the outcome.

"I think even the rain stopped for us," he said, early in a week when San Francisco was getting soaked. "It felt really good to be able to do something. It's a small dent, but a dent nonetheless."

On Monday, January 25, another benefit comedy night at the bar, located at 510 Larkin Street in San Francisco, will feature Conrad Roth, Veronica Porras, and others. The event starts at 7 p.m. Donations of up to \$20 are requested.

At the Sundance Saloon, a San Francisco spot popular with LGBTs who enjoy country-western dancing, about \$1,500 was raised on Sunday, January 17 to support RWF's efforts in Haiti.

For more information about RWF's efforts, visit [www.rainbowfund.org](http://www.rainbowfund.org).

To donate to SEROVie, direct aid can be sent to their office via DHL: 22 Cheriez, Zone Canape Vert, Port-au-Prince, Haiti or via the UNAIDS office in Haiti, mention SEROVie and Steve Laguerre.

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