



Meredith College's "Tide of Hope" Tsunami Relief Efforts

In January 2005, Meredith College made a commitment to provide both immediate and sustained aid to the victims of the December 26, 2004, Indian Ocean tsunami. Three projects have been identified as the focus of Meredith's year long fundraising efforts.

If you've been looking for information about Meredith's efforts or have been unsure about how you could help provide relief, the answers to many of your questions are outlined below.

Q. Why did Meredith choose Sri Lanka as the focus of its fundraising efforts?

Sri Lanka is a beautiful island nation located off the coast of India. As a country with a population of less than 20 million people, the tsunami had a particularly devastating impact on Sri Lankans. An estimated 31,000 people were killed, 500,000 individuals have been displaced, and 65,000 homes were destroyed. Per capita, Sri Lanka took the hardest hit of all the countries affected by the tsunami. Two members of the Meredith community—Betty Webb, English professor and study abroad director, and her husband John Rose—were in Sri Lanka when the tsunami struck. Because of their connections to the region, the "Tide of Hope" committee felt that the funds raised by Meredith would have the most impact there.

Q. I want to contribute to Meredith's tsunami relief efforts. Where should I send my money?

Please send checks to Sam Carothers, Chair, "Tide of Hope" steering committee. Checks should be made payable to Meredith College with a note in the memo line specifying which tsunami project you are supporting (i.e. General aid, boat project, orphanage, school. See below for complete project description.) Cash donations can be dropped off in person in the Campus Minister's office, located in the Meredith Chapel. All donations are tax-deductible.

Q. What will my donation support? Where will the money go?

Meredith has chosen three projects that will be the focus of our long-term relief efforts, and you can choose which one(s) you would like to support.

1. Fishing boats: Fishing is one of the largest industries in Sri Lanka and many families depend on it for their livelihood. More than 29,000 fishing boats were destroyed by the tsunami. Meredith has established partnerships in Sri Lanka that will allow the college to raise funds to provide fishing boats for as many families as possible. We plan to purchase boats for two communities in Galle, Lovigahawaththa and Ceylon Government Railroad (CGR). Lovigahawaththa is a predominately Buddhist community. Of its 220 inhabitants, 72 perished in the tsunami, 36 of them children. Of its 55 houses, only 3 still stand, and they are uninhabitable. The inhabitants of the CGR community arguably fared worse because they are in tents and the monsoon season is nigh. This is a community of 255 – 63 families, of which 62 lost their homes. Sister Alex, of the Sisters of Charity, and Father Noel Dias, an international law professor at the University of Colombo and a priest, have agreed to help us make sure our funds provide boats for the fishermen with the greatest needs.

2. **Orphanage:** During their trip to Sri Lanka, the Meredith team visited an orphanage in Colombo that provides care for boys who had lost their families in the civil conflict in the north of the country. These children, who have already been displaced once, are again without their home — the building that housed the orphanage was destroyed by the tsunami. The college aims to raise funds to support the food, clothing and other needs of each child. The children can be fully supported at the rate of \$30 per child, per month.
3. **The Pelena School:** This is a government school for grades 1-10 in Welligama. Its buildings were devastated by the tsunami and all school equipment was lost. Some 800 students are enrolled in the school which is scheduled to be rebuilt. It needs funds to replace books, purchase science lab equipment, musical instruments, computers, storage cabinets and other supplies. The school also needs English, science, music and computer tutors.

Q. How were these three projects chosen?

A seven member team representing the Meredith community recently traveled to Sri Lanka. During the 11-day trip the team talked with tsunami victims, met with government and humanitarian officials, and visited relief camps. Using the information gathered on the trip, the team recommended focusing our long-term efforts on the three projects detailed above. Meredith's "Tide of Hope" team endorsed these recommendations shortly after the "Thread of Hope" kick off event in April.

Q. I'd like to help out with one Meredith's long-term projects. How can I get involved?

In addition to contributing money for one of the college's three projects, you can also contribute your time. To ask for further information and/or volunteer your help on one of Meredith's three long-term projects, please contact one of the subcommittee chairs listed below:

- **Boat Project:** John Rose, johnrrose34@hotmail.com
Betty Webb, webbb@meredith.edu
- **Orphanage Project:** Bill Landis, landisb@meredith.edu
- **The Pelena School Project:** Gail Kenyon, kenyong@meredith.edu

Other members of the Meredith community who can tell you about the current situation in Sri Lanka are Vice President for Academic Affairs Rosalind Reichard (ReichardR@meredith.edu), and students Kelly Jones (JonesKel@meredith.edu) and Rebekah Meek (MeekR@meredith.edu).

Q. Where can I find news, updates and other information about Meredith's relief efforts?

Updates and information about this campus-wide relief effort can be found on the Meredith web site: www.meredith.edu/tsunamirelief. The web site includes contact information for each "Tide of Hope" steering committee member, updated articles on how much money has been raised to date, spotlights on various campus tsunami relief fundraising efforts, and journal entries from the Meredith team that visited Sri Lanka in late March.

Additional questions? Contact Sam Carothers, 760-8347 or carotherss@meredith.edu.