

WTO Foundation Donates Over \$20,000 for Haiti Disaster Relief

News

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DENVER: Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell Chairman Mike O'Donnell has a mantra he employs in making decisions - to do the right thing and the smart thing. "Where those two intersect is where I want our firm to be," O'Donnell says. The same applies to the firm's charitable foundation.

Two days after the earthquake struck Haiti, the WTO Foundation had initiated a drive to raise funds for disaster relief efforts, with a promise to match the first \$10,000 raised. When the drive ended eight days later, the Foundation had collected \$10,685. With its match, the total was \$20,685. That was the right thing to do.

One of the smart things the Foundation did was to open the fundraiser to all of its 130 firm personnel and anyone they wanted to ask for contributions. In other words, it didn't matter where the first \$10,000 that the Foundation would match came from because it was all going towards the disaster relief efforts. Employees invited their family and friends to participate and double their donation in the process. Twenty percent of the contributions came from "outsiders" who were connected to firm personnel, but who were not immediate family.

WTO Foundation executive director Connie Proulx invited her house guest, a staff person with Up With People's Cast A 2010, to ask the 100 young people from 17 countries who had just arrived in Denver if they wanted to donate. Far from home, they were relieved to find a way to participate in the world response to the disaster. They emptied their pockets to raise \$770 that was then matched dollar-for-dollar by the WTO Foundation.

The other smart thing the Foundation did was take the opportunity to strengthen the firm's relationship with a valued client by working with him and his Haitian wife to distribute the funds. The client will never forget the concern and caring WTO demonstrated for his Haitian family or the trust the WTO Foundation placed in him to use the money wisely. The money is being distributed among trusted nonprofit organizations that have been working in Haiti for years, including Doctors Without Borders, the World Food Program, the International Red Cross, and Yéle Haiti Foundation.

Proulx says, "The WTO Foundation's response was about being part of the world response to help people affected by a natural disaster. It was about coming together as a firm and involving our family and friends in doing a good deed. It was about showing support to a firm client whose family had been affected by the earthquake." It was the right thing and the smart thing to do.