

# Heart to Heart

## UNIVERSITY EXCEEDS GOAL OF \$40,000 FOR TSUNAMI RELIEF; DONATIONS WORTH \$1 MILLION IN GIVING POWER

In the heart-wrenching days after the earthquake and tsunami hit South Asia in late December, PLNU students, faculty, staff, friends and supporters accepted a challenge issued by Michael Pitts, vice president for Spiritual Development. Give \$1 million worth of tsunami aid by raising \$40,000 in donations.

Inevitably, disasters recede in people's minds as time goes by and subsequent events occur. But PLNU did not forget Pitts's challenge. In early April the goal was met and exceeded at \$46,257.

Why the goal of \$40,000?

"Heart to Heart is able to procure \$25 worth of supplies and support out of every \$1 it receives. So, 25 times \$40,000 equals \$1 million," said Pitts.

For a university of approximately 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students with roughly 650 full and part-time employees, asking for \$40,000 was a significant amount. But the community rose to the challenge, and in creative ways.

In addition, students instituted a beverage fast—promising to drink only water and donate the amount they would spend on coffee, soda and so on. The fast, which began Jan. 2 and ended Feb. 8, was sponsored by Point Loma's Center for Justice and Reconciliation, directed by sociology professor Jamie Gates. Total raised: just over \$2,000, according to Gates.

Another major source of fund-raising came from a unique arrangement between the student body and the university's food service provider, Sodexo.

Students were invited to fast from a meal on their food plan, with the idea that the cost of that meal would go toward tsunami aid. Sodexo agreed to donate an equivalent of the value of meals that were skipped. Students could donate just one meal; or donate one meal every Tuesday during the month of February; or donate one meal during every Tuesday throughout the academic semester.

Pitts said Sodexo handed his office a check for \$15,000 the second week of April.

An additional \$4,257 came in after that original \$25,000 check was handed to Morsch in January, bringing the total in mid-April to just over \$46,000.

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During chapel Jan. 10, the first day of the spring semester, Pitts appealed to students, staff and faculty to dig deep in their pockets for tsunami victims. He invited those who had not already chosen a relief organization to consider contributing to a fund set up for Heart to Heart. The nonprofit agency specializes in providing medical supplies and other items, such as water purifiers, to needy areas of the world. Its founder, Gary Morsch, a medical doctor and graduate of Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, Okla., started Heart to Heart in 1992.

In one week, the donations reached \$10,300. Another week brought the total to more than twice that. On Jan. 24, PLNU presented Morsch with \$25,000.

The funds came in many ways. People sent in personal checks. The Associated Student Body voted to donate \$10,000 left over from its 2003-2004 budget. A student vocal group, Pointless, performed in concert Jan. 23, and donated the proceeds: \$2,231. Paul Kenyon, chair of the music department and an accomplished pianist, began a series of benefit concerts, with the first raising nearly \$300.

## GROWTH IN GIVING

Pitts said that there has been a "ripple effect" throughout the spring semester.

For instance, so many people on campus gave during the semester's regular blood drive, which came after the tsunami aid fund-raising was in full swing, that the San Diego Blood Bank ran out of supplies.

Gifts totaling \$2,000 were laid on the stage after a performance of The Children of the World Choir, a traveling group of international young people. A group of students initiated plans to raise awareness of the Rwanda genocide, through education, during chapel and other events. And the model of the food-service fast is being talked about in other settings, according to Pitts.

After the news of the tsunami disaster filled the media, a feeling of helplessness was common. But thinking creatively has made a big difference, Pitts said.

"We are called to be involved with the needs of the world," said Pitts. "I'm proud to be associated with people who have such big hearts."