

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 156, No. 197

Friday, October 8, 2010

Franczek Radelet raises \$20,000 for Haitian earthquake relief

By Bethany Krajelis
Law Bulletin staff writer

SPRINGFIELD — It only took a matter of days for a Chicago law firm to turn a challenge to its employees into a hefty donation for earthquake relief efforts.

Franczek Radelet P.C., a labor, employment and education law firm, recently wrote a \$20,000 check to International Child Care (ICC), an organization that has been working to improve health conditions in Haiti since 1967.

The group, which also has efforts in the Dominican Republic, is in the midst of raising money to rebuild a portion of the Grace Children's Hospital that was destroyed in January, when a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti.

James C. Franczek Jr. said his firm's decision to donate was an easy one. There was an obvious need and he was familiar with one of the organization's board members, Illinois Sen. Kwame Y. Raoul, D-Chicago.

He and Raoul, whose family is from Haiti, worked together on various labor law matters when the senator was an attorney for the City Colleges of Chicago. He now works for Miller, Canfield.

"Jim called me up one day and said he had an idea," Raoul said. "He said he was going to challenge his employees to donate to our efforts and that his firm would match them up to \$10,000."

It was an idea that didn't take long to turn into a reality.

Franczek said his firm's 90 employees donated \$10,000 within a few days of his challenge. The firm matched that and sent a \$20,000 check to Raoul's organization, which honored Franczek and his firm at a special event last month.

"It turned out to be a very popular matching program," Franczek said. "It was a very short turnaround. It was an amazing response and I'm glad we could help."

Raoul said he was impressed with the law firm's quick efforts and pleased to see some more money go toward the ICC's efforts. He said it has been a struggle for the organization to compete with more well-known earthquake relief efforts, such as those spearheaded by the American Red



(From left to right) Stacy Waggoner, president of the International Child Care Inc. board, and Illinois Sen. Kwame Y. Raoul, who serves on the ICC board and works for Miller, Canfield, presented James C. Franczek Jr. with a plaque. Franczek Radelet P.C. donated \$20,000 to the ICC, which is raising money to rebuild the inpatient center of the Grace United Children's Hospital, which was destroyed by the earthquake that hit Haiti in January.

Cross and music star Wyclef Jean.

Regardless, Raoul said his group is making progress in its fundraising efforts and seeing some unexpected generosity along the way.

One recent donation came from 16-year-old Kendall Reynolds, who Raoul said took donations for the ICC at the door of her sweet 16 birthday party.

But, Raoul said there's still a long way to go before the ICC can start rebuilding the hospital's inpatient building, which was destroyed by the earthquake. Raoul said they need more than \$10 million.

Grace Children's Hospital is considered the flagship of the group's work in Haiti. It has been recognized as the country's leading medical facility when it comes to treating children with tuberculosis.

According to the ICC's website, it has set up a Relief and Reconstruction Office in Port-au-Prince and continues to care for

Haitians as it works to rebuild the hospital.

"The earthquake created a situation where we can't go back to where we were before," he said. "We need to do more."

In addition to fundraising, Raoul said he has been "friendraising" by reaching out to individuals and groups who have resources that could benefit ICC's mission. For instance, he said Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago provides advice on the rebuilding.

Raoul said he, along with architects and representatives of the Chicago hospital are set to go to Haiti in November. They will evaluate the situation and Raoul will also attend an annual ICC board meeting.

For more information or to learn how you can donate to the International Child Care's Haiti relief efforts, go to www.internationalchildcare.org or www.raoulrelieffund.org.