

LADIES OF HOPE INAUGURAL FUNDRAISER NETS \$3,000 FOR NEPAL QUAKE AID

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KATIE RUSCITO

MILLWOOD — When a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal last month, three women who work for a Millwood-based nonprofit organization sprang into action to help.

Apart from their full-time jobs at Project HOPE (Health Opportunities for People Everywhere) — which provides humanitarian assistance in more than 35 countries — Rachel Cline, Katie Ruscito and Sara Leonard formed their own fundraising group.

Called Ladies of HOPE, they raised more than \$3,000 at their inaugural event on Thursday at Valerie Hill Vineyard & Winery in Stephens City, where a mix of about 50 community members and companies were in attendance.

“I fundraise for a living,” Cline, 31, said Friday. “So I thought, why not do it on my own time?”

Ruscito, 34, said the group surpassed its fundraising goal, and that the money will go toward Project HOPE’s aid efforts in Nepal.

“People just want to give money to a good cause,” Ruscito said.

Project HOPE volunteers — who are from all over the U.S. — and staff arrived in Nepal within 48 hours after the earthquake struck to assess the damage before calling in reinforcements and supplies.

More than 8,000 have been left dead and more than 17,000 have been injured since the April 25 quake, which struck 50 miles northwest of Nepal’s capital of Kathmandu.

On May 12, a 7.3-magnitude earthquake struck about 50 miles east of the capital.



Rachel Cline

In the past month, HOPE volunteers have been stationed at the Manamohan Memorial Community Hospital, which is outside of Kathmandu.

Since the first quake, there were more than 40 operations, 150 emergency room visits, 80 inpatient admissions and 850 outpatient visits, according to Project HOPE.

“We try to alleviate the burden placed on local health systems,” said Ruscito, who is the senior administrative assistant to the vice president of development and communications.

She said Project HOPE’s focus is on sustaining long-term support rather than short-term health improvements.

The organization works with local government agencies, other international nonprofit organizations, and businesses.

To date, Project HOPE has raised more than \$500,000 in cash for Nepal and more than \$7 million for supplies, said Cline, a manager of institutional development at Project HOPE.

It falls on the organization’s shoulders to pay for shipping the supplies overseas for disaster relief, which can be expensive, Cline said.

Leonard, who is 28 and was unavailable for an interview Friday, is a development specialist for grants.

Cline and Ruscito said they plan to fundraise annually through Ladies of HOPE and will distribute the funding depending on where the most urgent needs are.

They said Valerie Hill Vineyard & Winery donated \$300 and 15 percent of Thursday's wine sales to Ladies of HOPE.

To donate to Project HOPE, visit projecthope.org.

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