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CNN **HeadlineNews** **HOT WIRED** HEADLINE NEWS

## Tsunami relief effort may break new ground in fund raising

By Christine Boese  
 CNN Headline News  
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**(CNN) -- The devastating tsunamis in southern Asia have inspired an unprecedented global outpouring of relief. Now some philanthropists are looking to "hot-wire" a tsunami relief effort on the Internet.**

Banda Aceh, Indonesia

The Disaster Relief Project adds an interesting twist to Internet fund-raising by organizing "EAid... for the tsunami victims." More than 100 experts, business leaders, motivational speakers, authors and celebrities are sharing the secrets of their success. Included in the group are the authors of "Chicken Soup for the Soul" along with management guru Tom Peters and senior vice president of the NBA's Orlando Magic, Pat Williams.

To raise money for the charity, the project is auctioning off online access to these speakers in several different electronic formats, from audiocasts linked to Power Point slides on the Web, to one-hour video Webcasts with question-and-answer sessions. The auctions, webcasts and seminar materials and the charity are all online.

Money raised is funneled to tsunami relief through the American Red Cross International Response Fund, the Save the Children 2004 Tsunami Relief Fund and Habitat for Humanity International.

Other charity auction items include face-to-face lunch sessions with some high-end speakers and tickets to exclusive or special events.

Larry Benet, founder of "Outside the Box Philanthropy," which is sponsoring the effort, says many of the speakers can get \$75,000 to \$100,000 just to give a talk, but they are donating time for the tsunami effort.

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With the help of elephants, a team of salvagers retrieves useful pieces of timber from the destroyed areas of last month's tsunamis in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

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Benet says anyone who donates *any* amount on the Web site, whether \$20 or \$2,000, will get access to most of the digital content, including Webcasts and teleconferences, what he calls a "webinar," or a Web version of a seminar.

He notes that donors will get more than just the satisfaction of contributing to an important cause. They get a chance to hear insights from experts in the areas of peak performance, leadership, sales and marketing, health and fitness, sports and investing. The project will even offer one-on-one encounters with professional athletes and tickets to some Hollywood premieres.

Meanwhile, the lunch series and other exclusive tickets and features will go up on eBay with a series of rolling 10-day auctions that could start this week. Benet says he hopes the first "webinars" can begin by February 1.

Speakers are still volunteering to join the project (there's a volunteer link on the site). Web designers and corporate sponsors are donating services and bandwidth to deliver the digital content as well.

Benet says 90 percent to 95 percent of the donations will go directly to the three charities, but if more corporate sponsors join in, he hopes that will approach 100 percent. Even the company processing the online credit card donations has waived some of its fees to allow the project to get off the ground more quickly.

The project actually started before the tsunamis hit, intended for hurricane victims in Florida, but as the scope of the tsunamis became known, Benet says it was a natural extension of the project's mission. One quarter of the money raised in this drive will still go to hurricane relief.

Ken Kragen, creator of "We Are the World" and "Hands Across America," is one of the motivational speakers contributing to the project. He writes that "E-Aid... for the tsunami victims" has the potential to create another type of fundraiser, just as "We Are the World" did 20 years ago.

Disaster Relief

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