

# Community



PHOTO COURTESY OF GREGORY LISS

The West Paterson Soccer Association (WPSA) recently gave a \$1,000 donation to the International Humanitarian Aid Foundation, which provides assistance to people in need worldwide. Pictured are coaches and players presenting their check.



# Soccer club donates to Haiti relief

BY TINA PAPPAS  
Staff Writer

**WOODLAND PARK** – The borough's traveling soccer league took the art of caring to a whole new level when they set out to help those from an earthquake-ravaged nation.

"The West Paterson Soccer Association (WPSA) raised money for Haiti's earthquake relief efforts by selling wristbands," said Barbara Fitzgerald, WPSA registrar. "For \$5 per wristband, which reads 'WPSA for Haiti,' we were able to raise \$1,000. Many of us sold them to family, friends and coworkers. Some of the kids from the league helped to sell them as well." The group presented the check to the International Humanitarian Aid Foundation (IHAF) after one of their games at Memorial Field.

According to Fitzgerald, one of the coaches in the league came up with the idea to raise the money through selling wristbands. Coach Ernesto Zavala spearheaded the effort to raise money for the donation, when he saw his workplace did something similar for Haiti.

"They held a collection over at my workplace recently and since the WPSA is a decent sized league, I thought we would have no problem raising the money," said Zavala. "We purchased 200 bands from a company over the Internet and we began selling them to friends and family. One of the parents from our league also knows the president of the IHAF so we were confident the funds

would be used directly for Haiti and that the money would be in good hands."

IHAF, an international humanitarian relief organization, was founded by Rev. Andrew Topp, of the First Reformed Church in Boonton, and friends in 2007.

The organization provides assistance directly to disadvantaged people throughout the world by providing care and compassion to those threatened by natural disaster, in need of surgery, homelessness or neglect, according to its Website. IHAF also works in conjunction with other humanitarian organizations. Topp is also involved with the Gift of Life Foundation Inc., and Rotary International District 7490.

"Pastor Topp recently brought a child back from Haiti who was in need of surgery," explained Zavala. "He has also been instrumental in helping to build homes to those who have been displaced."

"Homes for Haiti," as part of the IHAF mission, designs new homes for thousands of people left homeless by the earthquake, through the use of shipping containers that are converted with windows, doors, and a thatched roof for shade.

"The container homes are earthquake proof, hurricane proof and are cool, comfortable, long-term, low maintenance homes," said Topp. "They are excellent alternatives for new homes. Our goal is to acquire as many containers here in the U.S. as possible, where there is a surplus of containers. The price to purchase them

here is about \$1,200 each."

Once purchased, the containers are offered to anyone who will be shipping supplies to Haiti.

Once the supplies are unloaded in Haiti, the container is then delivered to sites where the organization can help local people turn their containers into homes.

"We were very grateful to the WPSA for the generous amount donated," added Topp. "I thought it was a great accomplishment that the league was able to come up with the amount by selling these wristbands. Through their donation, we'll be able to purchase a container, which will in turn help a family in Haiti get into their own home. The containers are eight by 40 feet and are made of metal, and are an excellent source for a shelter."

He added that there are currently over 100,000 Haitians still living in tents and makeshift shelters.

According to Zavala, the WPSA still looks to work with the organization.

"We're hoping to send some of our used sports equipment from our league that is still in good condition down to Haiti through the IHAF."

For more information or on how to help, visit [www.IHAF.us](http://www.IHAF.us).

The WPSA soccer program will begin registering for the next season in early June.

For more information visit, [www.wpsoccer.org](http://www.wpsoccer.org) or call 973-742-9275.

*Email: [pappast@northjersey.com](mailto:pappast@northjersey.com)*