

Where there is a need, couple seek a way

COVER STORY



Trying to save the world

High-powered friends help Tallahassee native Andrea Herz Payne and husband deliver aid

Leon grad Andrea 'Posy' Herz Payne and her husband, Hunter Payne, have formed Aid Still Required as a way to reach people in need long after the disaster is forgotten

By Paul de Revere
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

When George Clooney accepted the Bob Hope Humanitarian Award at this year's Emmy Awards ceremony, he ended with a clarion call for long-term aid to some of the most dire conflicts and disasters around the globe.

"Here's hoping that some very bright person ... can help find a way to keep the spotlight burning on these heartbreaking situations that continue to be heartbreaking long after the cameras go away," Clooney said. "That'd be an impressive accomplishment."

Apparently, the Hollywood humanitarian heartthrob hasn't heard of Aid Still Required. But if the Santa Monica philanthropist couple of Hunter Payne and Tallahassee native Andrea Herz Payne have anything to say about it, he will very soon.

Herz Payne grew up the youngest of four siblings on the north side of town on Lakeshore Drive.



Andrea Herz Payne on the Nile in Sudan. She got interested in helping when the Tsunami hit friends in Southeast Asia.

She graduated from Leon High School in the late '70s.

"Overall, high school was a great experience for me," Andrea said. "No matter what was going on, I was really interested in people. My mom and dad weren't social people but they always had visitors from all around the world. I got used to making other people comfortable."

Her father, Werner Herz, is a retired organic chemistry professor at FSU. He came to America from Germany in 1937 and met Herz Payne's mother Marcia, a French-born Ameri-

can, at the University of Colorado in Boulder. In 1949, the Herzes would come to Tallahassee during Florida State University's boom period, during its transition from an all-woman college to a co-ed university.

"At the time, I was very active in plant chemistry," Herz said. "All my children went by nicknames."

He named Andrea "compositae," the Latin family name for many species of flowers, including the sunflower. It became "Posy" for short. The nickname stuck with her, even as she went off to study theater at Bryn



Andrea Herz Payne and Hunter Payne, who live in Santa Monica, Calif., pose with one of the celebrity supporters of Aid Still Required, NBA basketball player Grant Hill of the Phoenix Suns.

Mawr outside Philadelphia.

"She was a very active and sweet child," he said. "She went to a school famous for various causes and she was infected by

that."

'An ocean away'

The seed that would sprout into the flower that is Aid Still Required

was planted six years ago when the a 9.3-magnitude earthquake in the Indian Ocean formed a tsunami that would devastate much of Southeast Asia, including Indone-

sia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Friends of Hunter and Andrea Payne lived seasonally in Phuket, a tourist mecca island off the coast of Thailand, and

the Paynes were deeply worried for their friends' lives.

In the coming days, the estimated death toll rose and, with it, their worry. An excruciating four

FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about Aid Still Required's special projects and order the ASR CD, which features songs by Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, Norah Jones, Bonnie Raitt, Sarah McLachlan, The Blind Boys of Alabama and others, at www.aidstillrequired.com.

days later, the family of Payne's friends sent out a mass e-mail to everyone on its contact list with what little Internet access they could find. Everyone was OK. In fact, their friends were helping out, delivering essential supplies to devastated residents.

"We were so moved by her e-mail and (the) stories coming out of there," Andrea Herz Payne said. "We were figuring out whatever way we could to help. You know, what can we do an ocean away?"

That's when Hunter, a singer-songwriter with a power-player Rolodex from his diverse careers as a media personality, Transcendental Meditation teacher and stock broker, decided he wanted to make a benefit CD. In fact, he wanted to throw a Hail Mary and get big-name artists to contribute.

He got some help from his pick-up basketball buddy, a former ambassador to Finland under President Bill Clinton, and, subsequently, from the office of the former president's Clinton Foun-

dation.

"We deeply value this project," the letter of support from Clinton's office read. "Not only will it raise much needed capital ... it will serve to sustain public awareness of the ongoing need for aid in the area."

With that kind of resounding endorsement, the couple's project was off to the races.

Persistence pays

Soon, they culled donated licensing rights for songs from Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, James Taylor and Bonnie Raitt, to name a few on the star-studded compilation.

Raitt took a personal interest in the project, giving the Paynes a particularly enthusiastic thumbs-up.

"We've all seen it," her statement reads. "Money pours in when a disaster first occurs. But then the world's attention turns to other matters and the real work of rebuilding goes underfunded. I'm involved with this project because it will help thousands restore their lives in a sustainable manner."

After a long process and many more urgent calamities worldwide, the CD was released in June. But the couple is far from through. They fancy themselves as "second responders," not necessarily striking while the iron and publicity is hot, Hunter said.

"One of the things that gets people is the idea of being left behind or for-

gotten," he said. "I think people relate to that."

The couple has crisscrossed the globe to help those in direst need, from the northern tip of Indonesia for Asian tsunami relief to northern Sudan, as part of their efforts to raise awareness about the government-run genocide in Darfur. Closer to home, they've visited New Orleans to aid continued rebuilding and cleanup of the Gulf Coast. The couple is also planning a trip to Haiti after its recent tumultuous elections and the anniversary of the earthquake that left thousands injured and homeless.

To further its efforts involving Darfur and Haiti, the Paynes have branched out into the world of sports celebrities, drafting basketball stars Kobe Bryant, Steve Nash and LeBron James, among other top players, into recording public service announcements and spearheading Sudanese divestment campaigns.

All together, it may seem like a huge, even daunting task, but they're up for it.

"Because it's not here at home, you can compartmentalize it," Hunter Payne said. "Someone who doesn't want to go to Indonesia or Darfur can get involved — that's why we founded this organization."

"You just have to keep on being persistent," Andrea Herz Payne said. "For me, it's a lesson to speak up, speak out and take action."