

Alpharetta's Somerby Community cares

by Jonathan Copsey

January 25, 2010

ALPHARETTA – Gabrius Albert is a 34-year-old waiter at the Somerby retirement community in Alpharetta, near the Verizon Amphitheater. He is also Haitian, and when he heard about the earthquake in his hometown of Port-au-Prince, his immediate thoughts went to his wife and twin 8-year-old boys who still live there.

"I was in shock," said Albert. "I've been praying and hope for the best."

In the days since the devastating earthquake, Albert, like so many Haitians, has been trying to get through to family and friends, fearing for their safety. As of Friday, he still hadn't heard of his family, his mother, or many of his relatives.

"I heard from some of my friends whose houses collapsed and they had a chance to get out. But my wife and kids, I haven't heard anything yet." Albert said. "One of my cousins was in Port-au-Prince. He heard a noise and went outside. When he turned around to go back inside, the building collapsed."

With communications disrupted, just getting through to anyone can be difficult. Of the eight Haitians who work in Somerby, only one had confirmed her family was safe.

"They are crying. They are very upset," said Harriet Ebanks, the head of housekeeping at Somerby. "Some have heard from their family members, and some haven't."

Debbie Michelet, the executive director of Somerby Alpharetta, said the residents were helping out as much as they can, and trying to keep the concerned employees busy, their minds off their worries.

"We're helping out as much as we can," she said.

Shortly after the earthquake, the resident's association made the decision to raise money for Haiti through the Red Cross, as part of their "Somerby Cares" program. In the past, the program and the residents have participated in Toys for Tots, food drives with the North Fulton Community Charities and a warm coat drive.

"Our residents are very generous," said Otis Jefferson, president of the Resident's



The residents of Somerby Alpharetta have set out to raise money for Haitian relief. Pictured are (from left): Otis Jefferson, Harriet Ebanks, Debbie Michelet and Gabrius Albert. Jonathan Copsey. ([click for larger version](#))

Association. "Even though we're retired, we're still concerned about what goes on... we don't want to be put out to pasture and forgotten."

All together, after passing the collection plate around during dinner over the weekend, the Somerby residents were able to raise several thousand dollars for the Red Cross.

"I miss everything about Haiti," said Albert. "But these people are like a second family. They've been very supportive."

http://www.northfulton.com/Articles-c-2010-01-25-181722.114126-sub_Alpharettas_Somerby_Community_cares.html