



Celebrity status yields charity action

From traveling the world to playing gigs, many celebrities parlay fame into opportunities to help others. The charity work means even more when it grows out of a personal connection, as these four celebrities found.

Among places to find more information on celebrities and charities:

Looktothestars.org. The site allows users to find out which charities their favorite celebrities support, offering interviews and news updates. Users can search the site's database by cause, celebrity or charity.

GivingBack.org. The Giving Back Fund encourages and advises entertainers and athletes on establishing charities. It also produces an annual list of top celebrity donors. The fund is preparing case histories on celebrity philanthropists, which it plans to post online.

TheCreativeCoalition.org. The coalition is composed of celebrities who lobby for various causes, particularly First Amendment issues, education and the arts.

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Lucy Liu

Charity: UNICEF

Website: unicef.org

Since being named a UNICEF ambassador in 2004, the actress has traveled the world for the organization. "I wanted to work



Wyclef Jean

Charity: Yele Haiti Foundation

Website: yele.org

The hip-hop artist started the foundation in 2005 to improve development in his impoverished homeland. In



Jenny Jones

Charity: Jenny Jones Foundation's Jenny's Heroes

Website: jennysheroes.com

Jones is giving away \$1 million. She's given herself a year to do it. Her Jenny's Heroes initiative offers grants of up



Greg Grunberg

Charity: Band From TV

Website: bandfromtv.org

The *Heroes* actor started his rock band about three years ago after a jam session with other celebrities at the House of Blues. True to its

internationally with children," she told USA TODAY last year. "You try to stick to a global idea of what you're doing instead of helping people individually."

Liu has explored violence against women and children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and visited earthquake victims in Pakistan. In March, she visited UNICEF-supported water programs in the Ivory Coast. Liu, a painter who also donates proceeds from her art shows to UNICEF, will be accepting the organization's Spirit of Compassion Award in December.

"A lot of people sometimes don't know where their money is going," she told CNN in July. "How can they help? I think if you are a familiar face on television, then they can sort of access that when they watch the news."

in conjunction with other organizations, Yele Haiti has offered scholarships, trained teachers and rebuilt schools. Jean even has gotten his famous friends involved. In September, he brought Matt Damon to Haiti to help distribute food and supplies after the nation was hit by a series of storms. In May, when he announced the launch of Together for Haiti, a partnership to ease the food crisis there, singer/songwriter Paul Simon was by his side.

Yele, which Jean coined in a song and means "a cry for freedom," has teamed with SolesUnited to distribute 10,000 pairs of recycled Crocs shoes this fall. Jean has made it clear that Haitians are not simply looking for donations. "The pleas I hear from farmers in rural Haiti are not for a handout, but for a hand up," he wrote in an opinion piece in *Newsday* in May.

to \$25,000 to people who submit online the best ideas to improve their communities.

Recipients have included a Las Vegas special-education teacher who started a homework and soccer program, an Oregon fire department administrator whose division needed a *Jaws of Life* and a Miami nun who needed 40 projectors for her high school.

Halfway to her goal by August, Jones dedicated September to teachers and began giving away a grant a day to schools.

"These are their dreams, and I'm just helping them to achieve their goals and help their communities," says Jones, who reads every application and posts updates on her website.

"This means so much more to me than simply writing a check."

name, the band boasts an all-star lineup of TV actors, with Grunberg on the drums, Teri Hatcher (*Desperate Housewives*) and Bob Guiney (formerly of *The Bachelor*, now on TLC's *Date My House*) as the main vocalists, Hugh Laurie (*House*) on keyboard, Jesse Spencer (*House*) on violin and James Denton (*Desperate Housewives*) on guitar.

The members donate all performance proceeds to their favorite charities. For Grunberg, that charity is the Epilepsy Foundation. "My oldest son has epilepsy, and I saw this band as a wonderful vehicle to help raise money," Grunberg says on the band's website.

Next up for the band? Its first performance DVD, *Hoggin' All the Covers*, to be released on Amazon.com this fall with a portion of the proceeds going to charity.

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