

What Matters Most

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by Christine Vick



Last week, my friend [Macy Robison](#) sponsored a photography fundraiser to benefit the relief effort in Haiti. She booked back-to-back sessions at a discount for two days, and all the proceeds went to the American Red Cross. Her efforts inspired me. I'd donated, but wanted to do more, and I also wanted to give my kids a chance to be involved.

After a few brainstorming sessions, my friend Heidi Benjaminsen and I decided to host a small bake sale in front of my house; I live on a busy street, so we thought we'd make the most of the traffic. For two days, our kids baked cookies and made caramel popcorn, packaged in individual bags tied with bright ribbon. We painted a giant sign in red letters that said Cookies for Haiti, and attached it to a long broom handle.

On a brisk New England Saturday--17 degrees!--we bundled into our coats, hats and gloves, and set up a table on the sidewalk to display our goods. We didn't know if anyone would stop, or how long our kids (ages 10, 8, 7, 5, 5 and 3) could withstand the cold (though we both had serious conversations with them about the suffering in Haiti and what a small sacrifice standing outside would be for us).



We were surprised all around. Our kids had a great time, lined up on the edge of the street, holding the sign, waving like grand marshals in a parade, chanting "Cookies for Haiti" in their loudest voices. When a car would pull up, they'd dash over in a jumbled group, talking over each other to explain the variety of cookies and the cost. Many generous passersby stopped to make a purchase or simply donate. Heidi and I were both overwhelmed when two men, who obviously didn't have a lot themselves, gave \$15.

After an hour and a half, we were sold out, and had made \$222.68 to donate to the Red Cross.

I know that poverty is endemic throughout much of the world, and even in my own country, yet I'm often too distracted by the busyness and clutter in my life to think about it consistently. The images and stories of the Haitian tragedy are wrenching, and I can't even begin to imagine the depth of suffering there.

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I've spend the last few weeks thinking about simplifying in a new way. What matters most aren't the activities and items that fill our days--or even streamlining closets and shelves. What matters most is having time for the people around us, in our families, next door, or even oceans away.

Christine Vick - *Christine Vick is the co-founder of Store and Style.*