

Hollywood stars support Filipino flood victims via Twitter

by DYMPHNA CALICA-LA PUTT
AJPress

HOLLYWOOD celebrities have joined the worldwide outpouring of care and support to typhoon Ondoy victims in the Philippines.

Bridging the vast gap from Los Angeles to Manila are social networking websites Facebook and Twitter.

Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables users to send and read messages known as tweets and read messages known as tweets. Tweets on the users' page are delivered to the users' subscribers known as followers.

Most of the celebrity tweets on Twitter were appeals to call the American Red Cross which has been receiving donations for victims of the torrential rains and massive flooding in Manila brought by the storm.

Hollywood power couple Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher wrote "Typhoon victims in Philippines in need of food/clothing. Call the American Red Cross to help."

Disney teen star Demi Lovato also urged her fans to do the same thing, saying "Come on guys, the Red Cross is a beautiful thing and the Philippines need OUR help... Let's put it to good use and make

our country proud."

"We have to be there for other countries. Please help," she tweeted again to her followers.

Latin pop superstar Ricky Martin also appealed to his twitter following saying, "If u want help the victims of the typhoon Ondoy/Philippines go here <http://ow.ly/triCU>." And even included a Spanish translation "Quieres ayudar? Directamnt a la cruz roja en Philipnas."

Other pop personalities, meanwhile, also tweeted their sympathy and support to Filipinos.

"My heart goes out to my friends in the Philippines," Josh Groban said. The pop and classical singer was received warmly by Filipino fans in a recent concert in Manila.

"You know, I feel so close to the Filipino people.. after I visited, I know a piece of my heart will always be there," singer Marie Digby, for her part, said.

In a later tweet she said, "Headed to a few meetings and then dropping off goods for the Philippines."

The massive flooding in the Philippines' capital, Manila was caused by tropical storm Ondoy (international codename Ketsana) last Saturday, September 26.

Government officials estimate the damages to private and public property now amount to P4.6 billion or close to \$98-million.

At least 240 people died, 37 are missing, and some 500,000 Filipinos in Metro Manila were displaced due to the floods. Health officials, meanwhile, have warned of an outbreak of diseases brought about by the dirt, debris and stagnant water.

Already, overwhelmed government officials called for international help, saying they might not have enough resources for its rescue operations. The flood has been the worst worst in almost 40 years. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared Manila a "state of calamity."

Meanwhile, another social networking site Facebook, also became a useful tool for overseas Filipinos to learn about the condition of friends and family in the Philippines during the aftermath of typhoon Ondoy.

Facebook, which has more than 300 million subscribers worldwide, allow users to post pictures and text for up to date information about its users. ■

Some people play the odds on health care costs

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offer insurance coverage and don't pay enough for workers to afford individual policies.

"Income is key and most of the uninsured have low incomes," foundation researcher Karyn Schwartz said. "If you look at your budget and think you can't afford it or can afford it if you eat only ramen noodles, you may choose not to get it."

All the health care plans that have emerged from the Democratic-controlled Congress would require everyone to have insurance, the way drivers in nearly every state must purchase auto insurance. Proponents say that by bringing everyone into the system, medical risk is spread over a broader population, bringing costs down.

Those who opt out voluntarily might have to pay a penalty. Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., who drafted the Senate Finance Committee's plan, set the penalty at \$3,800 for a family but cut it to \$1,900 amid complaints that the original level was too high.

Republicans have called the insurance mandate a new tax on the middle class. Obama disputes that, saying that whatever plan emerges from Congress must offer subsidies to lower-income people that will make coverage affordable.

In exchange for the requirement that everyone buys coverage, Obama wants a guarantee from insurers that they no longer will deny coverage based on an individual's health or drop coverage when a

person gets sick. The insurance industry has signaled it will accept that trade-off, but needs to convince skeptical consumers that it actually means it.

Doubts about what insurers will cover—coupled with the high cost of premiums—have driven some to opt out and take their chances.

Krista Neher, who's starting her own social media and marketing venture, is one.

The 30-year-old from Cincinnati recently left Procter & Gamble Co., where she was covered by the company's health care plan. After researching the costs of an individual policy, she decided to remain uninsured.

"I want to have health coverage, I think it's important. It bothers me that I could be hit by a car," Neher said. "But I have really low confidence that any insurance company would even cover me in that case, even after I paid all the high premiums. It just seems like a lose-lose situation."

Cash incentives

Many people who go without coverage have found that health care providers often will cut the price of a procedure if they know they'll be paid in cash rather than through insurance.

Jason Jepson, a self-employed communications consultant based in Southern California, decided against buying an individual policy he said would have cost twice as much as his \$1,250 monthly rent.

Typhoon 'Ondoy' update

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Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines

NDCC updates can be accessed via www.ndcc.gov.ph

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)

Contact Imee Rose Castillo / Rey Martija at +(632) 931-8101 loc. 506-507 / 951-7119

US Dollar

DSWD Foreign Donations Account No. 3124-0055-81 ZIP Address: TLBPPHM-MXXX

LBP Batasan Branch Constitution Hills, Quezon City, Philippines

Philippine Peso

DSWD Donation Account No. 3122-1011-84 LBP Batasan Branch

Constitution Hills, Quezon City, Philippines

Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC)

For donations to be acknowledged, please fax bank transaction slips to +(632) 525-5654 or 404-0979 with donor's name, address and contact numbers. Guidelines for on-line donations may be accessed via www.red-cross.org.ph.

US Dollar

The Philippine National Red Cross

Acct. No. 151-2-151-00218-2 Swift Code: MBTC PH MM

Metrobank Port Area Branch Anda Circle, Post Area, Manila, Philippines

The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 81140030-94 Swift Code. BOPIPHMM

BPI United Nations Branch Ermita, Manila, Philippines

Philippine Peso

The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 151-3-041-63122-8-MBTC

Metrobank Port Area Branch Anda Circle, Port Area, Manila Philippines

The Philippine National Red Cross

Account No. 4991-0010-99 BPI United Nations Branch

Ermita, Manila Philippines

Other queries and donations may be referred to the following agencies:

NDCC (Relief Goods / Rehabilitation Equipment)

Maj. General Glenn J. Rabonza

NDCC Administrator

Attn:Engr. Florentino Sison, Deputy Chief, Operations Division

Tel:+(632) 912-5979, 912-2665

Fax:+(632) 911-1873, 911-1406, 912-5668, 912-0984

Department of Health (Medicines and/or Medical and Humanitarian Missions)

Dr. Virginia Ala

Chief, Bureau of International Health Cooperation

Department of Health

Attn:Ms. Noni Balbino, Chief, Technical Division

Tel:+(632) 781-2843

Fax:+(632) 781-8843

DSWD (Relief Good)

DSWD Donation Drop Off Points

Pasay Area

National Resource Operation Center

Chapel Road, Pasay City

Attn: Mrs. Francia Fabian

+(632)852-8081 / +(63918) 930-2356

Quezon City Area

Disaster Resource Operations Monitoring and Information Center (DROMIC)

DSWD Central Office

Attn: Rey Martiga or Imee Rose Castillo

+(632) 951-7119 / 951-7435

Assistant Secretary Vilma Cabrera

+(63918) 934-5625

Manila Area

DSWD-NCR

San Rafael corner Legarda St., Quiapo, Manila

Attn: Director Delia Bawan

+(632) 734-8622 / 734-8642

Philippine Consulate General, Los Angeles, CA

Vice Consul John G. Reyes

Attn: Mr. Edwin Caraos

Tel: 1(213) 637-3010

Cell:1(213) 268-9990 (Duty Officer)

Fax:1(213) 639-0990

Email:losangelespcg@earthlink.net

You can also course your donations through CBCP Caritas Filipinas Foundation Inc.

Bank Account #4951-0051-72. ■

Feds seek ban on texting truckers, bus drivers

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that underscored the safety threat as more motorists stay connected with cell phones and mobile devices.

Fatalities and crashes

The Transportation Department reported that 5,870 people were killed and 515,000 were injured last year in crashes connected to driver distraction, often involving mobile devices or cell phones. Driver distraction was involved in 16 percent of all fatal crashes in 2008 and was more prevalent

among young drivers.

Senate Democrats said support was building in Congress to move against text messaging by drivers. The legislation, pushed by Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., would require states to ban texting or e-mailing while operating a moving vehicle or lose 25 percent of their annual federal highway funding.

"It's like driving with your eyes closed," said Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., a proponent of a texting ban.

He pays out of pocket for all medical treatment, saving money even after being treated for a broken ankle and severe strep throat.

"If you pay with cash, they do give you a discount—it's the big secret of not having insurance," Jepson, 35, said.

But Jepson said his lack of insurance has meant lifestyle adjustments, such as driving less and staying off freeways to avoid accidents. He says he supports Obama's requirement that everyone carry insurance if it can be made affordable.

LaHood declined to endorse Schumer's bill, saying simply that the administration would work with Congress. Many states have questioned the use of so-called "sanctions" against states that do not pass laws sought by Congress, especially during tough economic times.

"The words 'federal mandate' and 'federal sanctions' do not play well," said Bruce Starr, an Oregon state senator who attended the conference. (AP)

"I would pay for it. I'm just not sure it will really cover everything," Jepson said.

To ease fears of an unexpected medical crisis, registered nurse Mary Pitman of Vero Beach, Fla., refuses health insurance and takes the extra cash in her paycheck. Pitman, 54, puts \$3,000 per year into a pretax flexible spending account for routine care and another \$300 per month in an emergency fund in the event of a major illness.

"I have more control over my money this way, and there's a tax advantage," she said. (AP)



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For further information, contact Maestro Robert Shroder at 818-395-8936 or email filamsymphony@gmail.com

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