

MARTA KARPIEL

ALAIN PINEL REALTORS
CHARITY: FREEDOM FIELDS USA



After assisting Hurricane Katrina victims for 10 post-disaster days, Marta Karpriel returned to Carmel ready for more.

“When I saw how much you can do as a person, not being extremely rich but just giving of yourself, I wanted to be more involved,” she says.

Karpriel signed on as a volunteer website designer for Freedom Fields USA, a Carmel-based organization working to remove Cambodian landmines. Before long, the Alain Pinel Realtor began donating 10 percent of her net real estate income to the organization. She’s since traveled to Cambodia twice.

“These people are basically living in shack houses, with no bathrooms, no kitchen and such primitive conditions,” says Karpriel. “When you see what \$10 can do, what \$100 can do, it’s just unbelievable.”

Clearing mines is a basic step, she explains, that allows Cambodians to address bigger issues.

“If they have clean land, they can grow vegetables. They can build homes. They can go to school,” she says. “Then, all these other problems—prostitution and robbery and other problems—will become much smaller. Every time you go there, you cry. They are the most beautiful people with the most open hearts, and they are very, very thankful.”

To participate:
www.carmelcastles.com
www.ffusa.org

Photo: Kelli Urdahl

PHILANTHROPY

F R O M T H E H E A R T
CARMEL BUSINESSWOMEN MAKE GIVING A PRIORITY

BY RENEE BRINCKS



Photo: Andrew Parfenov

Throughout the past year, headlines often carried heaviness. Corporate scandal. Ponzi schemes. Job cuts and home foreclosures. It might have left Americans disheartened, except that every tale of greed was matched with stories of good deeds, generosity and hope.

People really do want to help others. The United States boasts more than 1.5 million public charities, private foundations and nonprofits, with nearly 160,000 based in California alone. Monterey County organizations remove landmines from foreign lands, rescue animals here at home, and serve youth, those with health challenges, senior citizens and countless other populations. With a still-shaky economy and a world where violence and mistrust leave many in fear, community involvement seems more important now than ever.

The three Carmel professionals featured here are among many locals who make charitable giving a big part of their business plan. Carmel Plaza boutique owner Silvia Sweidan grew up with a Jordanian father and a Ukrainian mother, studied cultural anthropology and social transformation, and has lived in Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Poland native Marta Karpel was a marketing executive for British Petroleum in Europe until settling on the Monterey Peninsula and launching a real estate career. Before joining her husband in the jewelry business, Deborah Lee was a Peace Corps worker in Ghana, and she

continues to volunteer for various causes.

While shaped by diverse life experiences, each of these women has reached a similar conclusion: Donating a portion of business proceeds to those in need makes good

sense. They turn their own careers and passions into opportunities to give. Clients get excited about the chance to make a difference. And, charity recipients feel the impact from the Monterey Bay to Cambodia to Lebanon and beyond.

Just what inspires these women's efforts?

For Karpel, it's gratitude.

"I think I'm just thankful for what I have, and I feel it's my obligation to the world to share that," she explains.

Solidarity moves Sweidan to act.

"Everyone's connected, and it's very powerful to know that we're all beings in the same community—a global community that we are responsible for," she says.

And for Lee, helping feels best when it means motivating others to feel like they have control of their destinies.

"I've done really big projects, when I was in the Peace Corps, and I've also done smaller ones. What's always moved me is empowering people to know that they can make a difference themselves," she says. "I love hooking up people with the right organizations and empowering them to make a little difference in the world."

Carmel

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KATHY IRELAND

Supermodel
Turned
Billion-Dollar
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