

McKeller's sister aids relief effort in Nepal

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Morgan Bellamy was on her way to the movies, traveling with two adults and seven children from her orphanage, when she felt the bus shake. At first, Bellamy thought their bus had been struck by another vehicle. But then the shaking continued.

"There was a girl right behind me on the bus that was crying and screaming out, 'Oh God, oh God! Please God, no!'" said Bellamy, the 26 year-old sister of essential academics teacher Paige McKeller.

On April 25, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Kathmandu, Nepal. The quake and the resulting aftershocks have killed more than 8,000 people in Nepal over the past month.

Bellamy, who is volunteering at an orphanage, was six miles from the epicenter of the initial earthquake. She and the other nine passengers on the bus were not injured, but it was still a harrowing experience.

"I think the scariest thing for me was not knowing what was going on right away and not understanding enough of the language to understand what people around me were saying," Bellamy said. "Seeing the people on the streets all crowded together crying and screaming was really frightening, too. It reminded me of a scene from 'The Walking Dead' or 'I am Legend,' minus the zombies."

While Bellamy's life was never in danger, McKeller was distressed about not being able to communicate with her sister for almost two days after the initial earthquake.

"I finally heard from her, it made me feel better that she was able to take a taxi to the American embassy [to] get Internet," McKeller said. "Now the power is back on and they have Internet back at the orphanage. Things are looking up."

Nepal is a third-world country struggling with develop-

ment and government corruption.

"It's nice because everything's really simple there," McKeller said. "The people are happy to have the little things in life, but it's also really sad because there's a lot of orphanages there, and a lot of kids that aren't getting the things they should have."

Relief has poured into Nepal from across the world. Bellamy, who began her trip to Nepal as a tourist, is now fully committed to helping the country recover. She has started a GoFundMe.com campaign with a goal of raising \$10,000. The money will be used to deliver food, water and tents to hard-to-reach villages.

"Our vision and hope is that if we help one family, they will feel compelled to help another family, and that family will help someone else in need," Bellamy said. "It will be a ripple effect of 'paying it forward.'"

McKeller has contributed to her sister's relief fund and has shared the GoFundMe page with her friends on social media.

"My co-workers have been really concerned," McKeller said, "They've asked about my sister. Some have also donated to the GoFundMe account."

McKeller has also shared her sister's story with her students.

"For them, I think it puts things in perspective," McKeller said. "I explain to them how lucky they are to live in the United States and how lucky they are to have all the things that we have and to not be effected by an earthquake like the kids in Nepal."

Bellamy plans to stay in Nepal until her visa expires in June.

"I'm just ready for her to be back, but I'm proud of her for what she's doing," McKeller said. "Whenever I talked to her and she was telling me about the aftershocks, I was like, 'Please just come home.' But she's like, 'No, I have to stay and help these people.' And I really respect her for that. I'm very proud of her."