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In Costa Rica, Former Tellurider Throws Haiti Benefit

By Katie Klingsporn, Associate Editor, Tellurider Daily Planet

Spencer Graves used to be a fixture in Telluride's upscale restaurants - he worked at Allred's, the New Sheridan Chop House and La Marmotte alongside some of the town's best chefs from 2003 to 2006.

Now, Graves and his wife, Katie, live in a dusty surf town in [Costa Rica](#) called Santa Teresa, where he is the executive chef of Hotel Florblanca.

It's whole different setting than these snowy mountains. But then again, a lot is the same. Namely, the way the community springs to action to help out when people are in need, he said.

"We're very similar to Telluride, it's about putting out good energy and trying to help out," he said.

Which is what is going on this Saturday night at the Florblanca, where Graves is cooking up a big, three-course Haitian relief dinner.

The meal is inspired by Haitian cuisine and features items like Haitian pumpkin soup, calalou (sautéed spinach with crab and bacon), Zepis-spiced red snapper and chocolate banana bread pudding. Graves expects 80 to 100 people to show up, and the hotel is donating all proceeds to UNICEF.

Graves, who now has two little boys with his wife, hopes to not only raise money for relief, but also to encourage others to do what they can.

"I'm trying to encourage as many to come partake in this dinner to help out and help Haiti, basically," he said.

And while they are a world apart these days, he says, he and Katie still think about Telluride often.