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January 20, 2016

Dear Friends,

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Len Marabella,
Executive Director

Once again, thank you for your generous donation to the victims of the devastating Valley Fires of last fall. From the cupcake sales by second graders to the second collections and other fundraisers by parishes, cash donations from across the country, and the thousands of pounds of donated food and clothing, the outpouring of support for our Lake County community was overwhelming and heart-filling.

The fires consumed not just homes and businesses, but resources as well. As the need increased and the donations mounted, it became clear that the community needed a coordinated plan of action. Catholic Charities partnered with other agencies to form Team Lake County (TLC), a collaborative of nonprofits, businesses, and local government which moved into action immediately to develop a county-wide plan to link needs with best resources and available funding.

Catholic Charities is a member of TLC's Case Management and Finance Committees. With a portion of the donations we received to assist fire victims, our agency's emergency efforts within TLC's coordinated case management response included:

- **Emergency food relief** – our staff and volunteers managed or participated in food distributions in Middletown and Kelseyville every week during the month following the fires, ensuring that fire victims had adequate food and fresh produce.
- **Disaster CalFresh enrollment** – we were the lead agency in the effort to enroll people who qualify for this crucial food stamp benefit. Within a seven-day period, 1200 families enrolled and over \$500,000 in immediate assistance was procured.
- **Direct financial assistance** – we helped fire victims address special needs such as replacing lost work tools, bus passes for those who lost vehicles, housing costs, gas money, car repairs, storage fees, and phone cards.

One of the people we helped was “Lara”, who along with her five children escaped not only the fire, but an abusive husband. After the disaster, Lara and the kids moved in with her sister to a mobile home with no stove or hot water. In partnership with Habitat for Humanity, we helped them purchase a stove and water heater so they could cook and take warm showers. The children are now attending school for the first time. Lara's sister “Julie” was so grateful she now volunteers with our Lake County Rural Food Program.



Now that emergency response agencies such as Red Cross and FEMA have dealt with the most immediate needs, our work continues in providing consistent long-term assistance to victims. With the significant funds contributed to Catholic Charities, we will provide service in several key areas to help people rebuild their lives:

- **Opening a full time office in Middletown** as an integral community resource for accessing services. We are collaborating with North Coast Opportunities and the county in a community where 40 families from one parish alone lost their homes. Many had no insurance and we are working closely with them to facilitate access to all the resources they need to rebuild their lives.
- **Continued direct support for fire victims** in the form of targeted financial assistance, health and wellness services, and re-employment coaching.
- **Immigration assistance**, including bilingual assistance, for those who need services, have lost key legal documents, or who do not qualify for federal assistance.

Our vision is that 2016 will be a year of helping fire *victims* become *victors*, helping them overcome whatever obstacles they have in securing a much brighter future for themselves and their families in the communities they love. We are honored to undertake this long-term effort with the support you have given. Thank you.

With gratitude,



Len Marabella
Executive Director

P.S. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at www.srcharities.org or contact Margie Pettibone at (707) 528-8712 x161 to attend one of our upcoming Hope Works Wonders one-hour tours.