

January 20, 2016

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"The real power is love. That which empowers others, that which arouses action, that which no chain is able to hold back. Let love simply bloom ... and it is unstoppable."

– Pope Francis

Dear Friends in Faith and Service,

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The generous donations to Catholic Charities to assist victims of the devastating Valley fires last fall were inspiring. From major donations from individuals and organizations to cupcake sale proceeds from second graders, the outpouring of support also signaled a great responsibility on our part to make sure we make the best possible use of those resources. Especially moving were the contributions we received from parishes, schools and church groups whose belief in a common call to love and care for neighbors in need inspired their giving. Those included:

Rick Abbott
Stella Agudelo
Dennis J. Byrne
Frank Connelly
Kevin Connolly
Nancy Moran
Maridel Perlas
Jacqueline Scott
Greg Steele
Patricia Wiele

Resurrection Parish Community
St. Rose of Lima Church
Catholic Charities USA
Resurrection Church
St. John the Baptist Church
Knights of Columbus - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
Council #15499
St. James Parish
St. Joseph Church
St. Sebastian Church
Church of St. Vincent de Paul
St. Anne School
St. Joan of Arc Church
St. Thomas Aquinas Church
St. Helena Catholic Church
St. Francis Solano School
St. Joseph Men's Club
St. Paschal Baylon Church
The Diocese of Monterey Parish & School
Resurrection Church
Italian Catholic Federation #75
St. Vincent de Paul Church
Knights of Columbus 2270 & 982
Roman Catholic Bishop of Oakland –
St. Joseph Parish

St. Cecilia School
Our Lady of Good Counsel
St. Vincent de Paul Elementary School
St. Aloysius Church
St. Joseph Council No. 9202
St. Philip the Apostle Church & St. Theresa of
Avila Mission
St. Eugene's Cathedral Elementary
St. Anthony Catholic Church
St. Anthony Church
St. Ignatius College Preparatory
School of St. Thomas the Apostle
St. Sebastian's Young Ladies Institute #116
Knights of Columbus CNCL#13765
Star of the Valley Church - Men's Club
Newman Hall - Holy Spirit Parish
St. John the Baptist Church
St. Christopher School
Knights of Columbus, Dist 19, St. Vincent's of
Petaluma 11431
St. Apollinaris School
St. Francis Sisters
Holy Family Women's Club
Disalced Carmelites House of Prayer

Len Marabella,
Executive Director

The fires consumed not just homes and businesses, but resources as well. As the need increased and donations mounted, it became clear that the community needed a coordinated plan of action. In the early weeks after the fires, Catholic Charities partnered with others to form Team Lake County (TLC), a group of nonprofits, businesses, and local government whose purpose is to organize county-wide efforts to most effectively meet the needs of those who suffered fire-related losses.



Catholic Charities is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, which recognizes non-profits which adhere to a high level of performance standards and deliver the highest quality services to all of its stakeholders.

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 ongoing 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.