

Napa
Valley
Community
FOUNDATION

October 20, 2021

Dear Neighbors,

One year ago today, the last Napa County wildfire of 2020 was finally contained.

From the first lightning strike in mid-August to full containment of the Glass Fire in the second half of October, fires burned in our Valley continuously and ferociously for 65 days.

Thousands of brave firefighters fought the flames while residents countywide suffered through smoke, haze and uncertainty. For those closest to the fires, uncertainty demanded hyper-vigilance, which often gave way to dread, followed by flight. Throughout, as many as 32,000 Napa County residents were evacuated from their homes, not knowing if those homes would still be standing when they returned.

In Napa County, the LNU Lightning Complex and Glass Fires burned more than 220,000 acres; and destroyed or damaged more than 680 residences and almost 450 commercial buildings. In a bitter irony of the housing crisis that pre-existed the fires, many of the homes we lost were in and around Berryessa and Deer Park: nooks of the county that are, by local standards, affordable. Sadly, three Napa County residents lost their lives.

This is not Napa Valley's first devastating disaster, nor will it be our last. Because of the pandemic, new challenges emerged during last year's fires, like the lack of congregate sheltering and decreased childcare options. Workers in wine and hospitality were already facing reduced hours and job losses, even before smoke taint became another significant source of hardship.

Once again, our community stepped up in a big way to lend a helping hand.

Neighbors opened their doors and sheltered families and pets, sometimes for weeks at a time. Napa Valley's finest cuisine was dished up to first responders and evacuees on paper plates. Second responder nonprofits got to work to serve those in need, even as some of their own staff members were being evacuated. The Napa Valley Vintners, whose lead gift of \$10 million established our Disaster Relief Fund after the 2014 South Napa Earthquake, sent out a call for aid to myriad friends and partners around the country and the world.

And, just as we have done in every disaster since the 2014 quake, Napa Valley Community Foundation mobilized immediately. We distributed funds to nonprofits providing critical relief services and direct cash aid to survivors and evacuees, while carefully allocating financial resources for the longer haul of rebuilding and recovery.

In the last 365 days, with support from thousands of generous donors in Napa County and beyond, we have granted \$2.4 million for wildfire relief, recovery and future resiliency to 16 nonprofit organizations. So far, this funding has provided:

- Relief services to more than 3,500 survivors, including medical care, counseling, temporary shelter, food, clothing, legal aid, case management and insurance navigation assistance
- Gift cards to more than 1,500 evacuated families to purchase food, clothing, gas or rent hotel rooms
- Direct cash aid to 461 workers and families who lost homes and/or work because of the fires, in amounts ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,500
- Operational support for the Napa Valley COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster), which convenes more than 100 member nonprofits, government agencies and faith-based groups to ensure a coordinated and effective response in times of disaster
- Project support for the County of Napa to purchase the Zonehaven Emergency Management program, which will facilitate safer and faster evacuations in future fires
- Seed funding to hire the first Executive Director of the Napa Communities Firewise Foundation, so the organization is prepared to draw down and spend at least \$35 million in government grants over the next five years for countywide fuel mitigation and other fire prevention projects
- Ongoing support for a local program that trains low-income residents to join the construction workforce and has thus far produced more than 50 graduates who are able to assist with rebuilding.

The work continues. Each time disaster strikes our community, we pledge to respond immediately, but also to stay engaged long after the last TV news vans have decamped from the Valley.

Recently, our Board of Directors approved an additional \$2 million for long-term recovery, to help 2020 wildfire survivors rebuild or find alternate housing arrangements. All the while, in the little notches that exist between local emergencies, we are on the prowl for other projects that promise to make Napa County residents more prepared and resilient in the event of future disasters.

We are so grateful to the donors who have supported these efforts, the nonprofits and community leaders who work tirelessly to assist people through recovery, and our Valley residents, who have shown incredible resilience, yet again.

Sincerely yours,

Terence P. Mulligan
President
Napa Valley Community Foundation