

## NCO and MLCU provide support to Valley fire victims

Written by Lake County News reports

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LAKE COUNTY, Calif. – When the Rocky and Jerusalem fires hit Lake County, North Coast Opportunities (NCO) and Mendo Lake Credit Union (MLCU) created the Lake County Wildfire Relief Fund to help those impacted.

In a few short weeks they collaborated to raise funds, advertise the effort, write and translate applications to the fund, create a community-based managing committee to review application, and verify the losses of those who applied.

As of last week, the committee voted to disburse \$24,000 in \$3,000 increments, and all of those checks were mailed to fire victims.

With the significant impact of the Valley fire, those relief efforts have continued.

“With all of the processes to collect and distribute funds already in place, it was easy to hit the ground running,” says NCO Executive Assistant Elizabeth Archer. “We have already started receiving applications from Valley Fire victims, and our phones ring off the hook all day long.”

In the last three days donations from hundreds of individuals around the community and the country have poured in.

To date, the fund has raised nearly \$100,000, and counting, in fire relief funds this summer.

Other than a small fee taken by PayPal, 100-percent of monies raised go directly to fire victims; NCO and MLCU donate all staff time and administrative fees.

“The human spirit is incredibly kind and generous, and it’s been humbling to watch the donations come in,” said Archer. “And, since NCO and MLCU are known and trusted entities, people are confident that donations will be used effectively.”

Cal Fire and many Lake County agencies continue to refer donors to the fund. The United Way set up a separate fund and then collaborated with NCO and MLCU in order to be more effective and not duplicate efforts, thus increasing the impact of the fund. NCO makes a good partner, as the dual-county agency is a familiar face, trusted, and invested in the community.

The intent of the Lake County Wildfire Relief Fund is to be a nimble operation and provide relief in real time to those who need it most.

NCO and MLCU also collaborate with other agencies, organizations and individuals working on fire relief to avoid duplication of efforts.

NCO is the community action agency for Lake and Mendocino counties, and part of its mission is to serve those in need during emergency situations.

“Our values as an organization and as concerned citizens compelled us to act,” said NCO

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Executive Director Patty Bruder. “As soon as people saw the impact of the Valley Fire, donations started coming in; the response has been incredible.”

The Lake County Wildfire Relief Fund was officially set up at MLCU by NCO as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

NCO has extensive expertise working on the ground in the affected communities of Lake County. NCO is a major player in Lake County through such programs as the national Way to Wellville Challenge and the Lake County Fire Response committee, composed of major agencies and nonprofits in Lake County to react to the wildfires this season.

The organization also has set up and manages a fire relief volunteer database through its volunteer network, and works with the local as well as state Offices of Emergency Services.

MLCU is an active presence in Lake County and is committed to the communities it serves. One-third of its membership base is located in Lake County, and many members have lost everything. MLCU is all about people helping people, and its mission is to support the economic well-being of the communities it serves.

Anyone wishing to donate to the Lake County Wildfire Relief Fund can go in person to any MLCU branch, or send a check to MLCU made out to NCO with “Lake County fire relief” in the notes field.

There is also a [PayPal account](#) set up to accept online donations, which can be found on the front pages of both the [NCO](#) and [MLCU](#) Web sites.

For more information on how to donate and how to apply for funds, contact NCO Chief Financial Officer Carolyn Welch at [cwelch@ncoinc.org](mailto:cwelch@ncoinc.org) .