



UNITED WAY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: HERE TO STAY



After the devastation of the Camp Fire, United Way of Northern California stepped up to help. There's still more to be done!



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A UNITED FRONT

United Way of Northern California helps bring communities together

BY ANNE STOKES

When the 2018 wildfires devastated Northern California communities, the nation was shocked at the apocalyptic images in the news. Many asked, how do you rebuild a community when there's nothing left? The answer is: You do it together.

United Way has a long history of working together for the greater good. Since its inception in 1887, United Way has grown into a network of 1,800 chapters throughout the world, each governed by a local board and responsive to its community's needs. United Way of Northern California (UWNC) was established in 1953 and collaborates with nonprofits, charities and government agencies within its region to move local families out of poverty — primarily through education, financial stability, health and wellness.

In 2011, UWNC was asked to incorporate Butte and Glenn counties into its region, expanding the service area

to 600,000 people across 30,000 square miles. Although it funds organizations throughout the nine-county region, UWNC programs and services are based in Shasta and Tehama counties. Now, UWNC programs are expanding to serve more residents within the entire region. To collaborate more closely with agencies in Butte and Glenn counties, and to better meet Camp Fire survivor needs, UWNC opened an office in Chico in July 2019.

When the Camp and Carr fires decimated Butte, Shasta and Trinity counties, UWNC rallied hundreds of volunteers and businesses across the state and beyond to support recovery efforts. In total, they raised more than \$13 million in assistance for survivors. While the United Way collaborated with other nonprofits and government agencies, they felt a more direct approach was also needed. In addition to connecting survivors to resources and programs, more than 8,000 households that lost their homes in the Camp Fire were

“Our work in Butte and Glenn counties after the Camp Fire is unprecedented and in direct response to the critical local need.”

MELODY PROEBSTEL
Regional director of Butte and Glenn counties, United Way of Northern California



United Way of Northern California volunteers, staff and grant recipients gather in UWNC's new Chico office.
Photo courtesy of United Way of Northern California

each given a \$500 emergency grant to assist with immediate needs.

“Our work in Butte and Glenn counties after the Camp Fire is unprecedented and in direct response to the critical local need,” says Melody Proebstel, UWNC regional director of Butte and Glenn counties. “We felt ... that getting money into people's hands was key to having some movement toward recovery.”

Now that communities are rebuilding, UWNC is committed to maintaining a presence in Butte and Glenn counties. With a new office in Chico, staffers are better able to help with disaster case management, including assisting survivors develop realistic, long-term recovery plans. UWNC is also looking to assist local governments and nonprofits develop proactive plans and programs to prepare for any future disasters

“What are the things we need to activate quickly? What are the things we want to make sure we do (and having some of those things lined up ahead of time in order to make sure we're actually meeting the needs of the community as quickly and efficiently as possible?” Proebstel explains, adding “We're being the community agencies and resources, not just United Way.”

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

United Way of Northern California collaborates with local organizations to address gaps in community resources. **In 2019, UWNC awarded \$200,000 in grants to Butte County nonprofits that were assisting Camp Fire survivors, including:**

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| • Boys & Girls Club of the North Valley | • Caring Choices | • Help Central | • Oroville Southside Community Improvement Association |
| • Butte Community Action Agency | • Chabad Jewish Center | • Jesus Center | • Peg Taylor Center |
| • Butte County Fire Safe Council | • Chico Housing Action Team | • Magalia Community Church Resource and Recovery Center | • Tzu Chi Foundation |
| • Camp Fire Zone Project | • Community Housing Improvement Program | • Oroville Rescue Mission | |

Additionally, \$100,000 of direct assistance was provided to Camp Fire survivors through these partner agencies:

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| • American Legion | • Plumas Crisis Intervention & Resource Center | • Salt Ranch | • Stonewall Alliance | • VECTORS |
| • Orchard Church | • Safe Space | • St. Vincent de Paul | • Throwing Starfish | • Youth for Change |

THE NIGHTMARE THAT CAME TRUE

The Camp Fire robbed survivor Carrie Max of the life she knew, but she's determined to rebuild and stay in Paradise

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

The horror known as the Camp Fire ignited on the morning of Nov. 8, 2018, ripping through the towns of Paradise, Concow and Magalia like a hurricane of flames, displacing thousands of people.

Among them was Carrie Max, 57. "I grew up in Paradise, it was a beautiful town," she says.

"I didn't lose just my home," she adds, "I lost my life."

Max says she "feels guilty" that she was in the Bay Area the day the house burned down, but also is "kind of glad I wasn't there. I probably wouldn't have made it, trying to save everything."

Max had cared for her ill mother for three years before the fire, but finally had to place her in a nearby convalescent hospital.

When news of the fire reached Max, she made frantic phone calls trying to locate her mother, but the chaotic scene in Paradise was overwhelming.

"I was terrified, I didn't know where she was for two days," she says. "I couldn't drive up there because of the traffic jam, and they wouldn't have allowed me in."

It turned out her mother and the other hospital patients had been evacuated to Chico, normally a 20-minute drive that became an eight-hour nightmare. Since then, her mother has lived in a care facility in Grass Valley and "doesn't really talk anymore."

Because residents weren't allowed back into Paradise for weeks after the disaster, "I didn't know whether our home made it or not," Max recalls. In desperation, she gave her address to a PG&E worker, who videotaped the property. "There was nothing left except the chimney and my truck I'd just finished restoring," she says. "It had melted."

When Paradise was reopened to residents, "I brought a sleeping bag and spent the night on the property, listening to my (late) father's wind chimes," Max says. "I felt I needed to be one with my memories."

The following months were grueling for Max. Mostly

she lived in trailers in Chico, Yuba City and finally Paradise, attending local town hall meetings and commuting to visit her mother. "I was broke, and there was so much I needed to keep going," she adds.

Max completed an "intake for case management" by calling 2-1-1 and was referred to United Way case manager Alyson Feldmeir, who "has helped me survive," locating funds for food, clothing, bedding, car repair and much more.

"She's the best emotional support you could want," Max says.

Max and Feldmeir worked together to apply for a loan so Max can rebuild the family home.

"Some people left after the fire and never looked back, but I grew up here, we're family here, and I want to stay and keep moving," Max says. "Since the fire, it seems the right people have been in the right places for me. It's felt like love and I don't want to walk away from it."

"There was nothing left (of our house) except the chimney and my truck I'd just finished restoring. It had melted."

CARRIE MAX
Camp Fire survivor



The 2018 Camp Fire destroyed thousands of homes in Paradise.
Photo by Charles Finlay

UNITED WAYS UNITE FOR EACH OTHER

United Way is always there for communities in times of emergencies and disasters – and there for each other, as well.

That was especially true in the first weeks of the Camp Fire, when an outpouring of help came to United Way of Northern California (UWNC).

"We were fortunate to see United Ways around the country divert resources to our agency to help people in need," says UWNC Chief Development Officer Jacob Peterson. **"There were 100 or more fund-raising campaigns on our behalf, and we set up campaigns in conjunction with many other United Ways, as well."**

For instance, UWNC worked with United Way Bay Area on a telethon that raised \$150,000 for Camp Fire relief in just one day.

The outpouring was generous – United Way of Greater Houston sent a check for \$35,000 – but not wholly unexpected. "We all try to help each other out when and where we can, even though we all operate autonomously," Peterson says. "Our power is in standing together."

Peterson made clear that the fallout from the Camp Fire is ongoing. **"The needs are still there,"** he says. "We're working hard to elevate survivors to a more stable place, but it's a long-term project."

HELPING RECOVERY

In the wake of the Camp Fire, United Way of Northern California supports survivors

Over the past 18 months, United Way of Northern California (UWNC) played a key role in responding to the most destructive wildfire in California history. Destroying communities in Paradise, Concow, Magalia, Butte Creek Canyon and Yankee Hill, Camp Fire impacts rippled throughout Butte County and UWNC's rural nine-county region. While supporting survivors at the Disaster Recovery Center, UWNC joined the Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG) to collaborate in recovery for the communities and survivors.

UWNC immediately sought effective ways to address common survivor challenges: mental health, inadequate housing, recovery barriers, and isolation from loss of community. Butte/Glenn 2-1-1 and UWNC began developing an outreach program for displaced survivors. UWNC also created an initiative for accessing stable housing, called Stable Housing Opportunities Program (SHOP), and contributed to development of an LTRG Disaster Case Management (DCM) system to help survivors design recovery plans.

Most clearly represented by FEMA's designation of only 13 disaster case manager positions to support Camp Fire survivors' recovery, federal and state resources are not meeting community needs. Commitment from multiple community organizations and privately funded support have been essential to increasing recovery resources. UWNC was one of five agencies funded by the North Valley Community Foundation's Butte Strong Fund to establish a community-based DCM system that supplements resources funded by state and federal agencies. Although the system has grown to include more community organizations and significant local support, it is still not enough.

Requests for DCM assistance ballooned faster than this unique community-based multi-agency disaster response could meet, and UWNC's additional programs are helping to fill gaps. Funded by the American Red Cross, Locate & Serve will connect Camp Fire survivors outside of Butte County with counseling services,

employment support, and relevant resources in their new locations. While this program is still being developed, survivors outside of Butte County can continue seeking information about relief and recovery resources by calling Butte 2-1-1 at 1-866-916-3566. They can also opt in to receive information about the program by texting CFCONNECT to 898211.

UWNC's largest program in Butte County, SHOP is designed to help survivors "move to the next stage of their recovery, which is getting them into stable housing," says SHOP specialist Brian Boyer.

"By the time they get to me, a survivor has secured an available apartment or housing, they just don't have money for their first month's rent or utilities," Boyer says. "Paying landlords or utility companies on their behalf, we've assisted

"It's wonderful to be able to play a part in helping these folks get back on their feet."

BRIAN BOYER
Stable Housing Opportunities
Program specialist



After the 2018 Camp Fire, United Way of Northern California volunteers stepped up to help.
Photo courtesy of United Way of Northern California

about 50 families secure stable housing all across the country."

Boyer adds, "United Way of Northern California will continue to serve those who are in the greatest need, in addition to those who are in the process of rebuilding. It's wonderful to be able to play a part in helping these folks get back on their feet."

DISASTER CASE MANAGEMENT FAQs

To help the community understand Disaster Case Management, agencies answered some of the most frequently asked questions:

What does a disaster case manager do?

Help survivors to develop a realistic long-term recovery plan for recovering from the disaster.

What is a Long Term Recovery Plan?

A Long Term Recovery Plan:

- Identifies disaster-related need(s) to be addressed.
- Identifies the resources (personal, family and program assistance) available to meet the needs.
- Determines steps needed to obtain support for these aspects of the Long Term Recovery Plan.

How do I get on the list for a disaster case manager?

Complete the online intake form at bit.ly/CampFireDCMIntake. There is no guarantee of receiving immediate contact or services.

Do I re-submit my request if I haven't heard from a disaster case management agency?

No. Once you have submitted a request, you are included in the waiting list.



Additional answers can be found online: www.campfirelongtermrecovery.org/s/DCM-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf.

HELPING FAMILIES THRIVE

United Way of Northern California partners with community to treat kids to an afternoon of fun

BY ANNE STOKES



Young survivors of the Camp Fire were treated to a Target shopping spree, courtesy of United Way of Northern California and several other corporate and community partner organizations. Photo courtesy of the United Way of Northern California

Rebuilding your life from scratch is hard. Rebuilding an entire community is herculean. In Butte County, United Way of Northern California is committed to collaborating with government agencies, fellow nonprofits and survivors themselves to get the community of Paradise back on its feet. In doing all that hard work, however, it's important to include a little joy.

"It's hard to think through all the steps alone when you have limited to no resources and have been through a trauma like this," says Desiree Gonzalez, development director with United Way of Northern California. "Here in Butte County, our focus is going to remain disaster recovery for some time. We also fund or run programs that are related to health, housing, financial stability and education."

Steven Wright, principal of Achieve Charter School, lost his family's home during the 2018 Camp Fire. The Wrights were far from alone; he says a majority of his coworkers, students and his own extended family all lost their homes as well.

"It's such an overwhelming task to rebuild your life from scratch," he says. "We still have families living in RVs, we still have families doubled up with other families, there are still people trying to figure out how to rebuild their lives."

In January and November 2019, United Way of Northern California coordinated something special for those families. Together with Target, the nonprofit

hosted a shopping spree for kindergarten through eighth-grade students affected by the Camp Fire.

With a grant from the Chico Children's Endowment, donations and volunteers from Kleen Kanteen, Starbucks, UPS and other businesses, along with donations from their Workplace Giving campaign and individuals, more than 150 students received \$150 each to spend at Target in Chico.

"This was, and continues to be, a traumatic experience for thousands of families," Gonzalez says. "We really wanted to make their holiday special, give them hope and let the kids know the community hasn't forgotten about them."

Wright, whose two young daughters had the opportunity to participate in the November event, says having those type of positive experiences is one of the things that has really helped his family get through such hard times.

"Seeing your kids getting spoiled and taken care of feels good. One of the biggest concerns for all of us as parents [is]

... how do you help your kids navigate and weather that kind of event? This is something that's going to change their lives forever. So when you see other people caring about your kids, it feels great."

For more information on upcoming events benefiting United Way of Northern California, visit www.norcalunitedway.org or call 530-809-4295.

"When you see other people caring about your kids, it feels great."

STEVEN WRIGHT
Father, Camp Fire survivor
and principal of Achieve
Charter School

HAVE FUN AND SUPPORT THE UNITED WAY

Together with the Feather River Recreation & Park District, United Way of Northern California will host a 5K Color Run/Walk fundraiser at the 12th annual Wildflower and Nature Festival. The family-friendly event features vendor booths, crafts, games, live music and food trucks. Proceeds from the Color Run benefit Camp and Carr Fire recovery, youth programs and more.

"This 'Spring Into Color' is going to be our inaugural fundraiser and we hope to continue it in the following years," says Development Director Desiree Gonzalez. "A lot of people have the perception that if you give to United Way ... that it goes to other areas. But each United Way is a local entity unto itself and the funds that are raised there stay local."

EVENT DETAILS

Spring into Color 5K Run/Walk
Check in at 9 a.m. Saturday, April 4
(advanced registration is encouraged)
Riverbend Park, 50 Montgomery St., Oroville



For more information, including registering for the Spring into Color fundraiser, visit www.norcalunitedway.org or call 530-809-4295.



At several special events and on a daily basis, United Way of Northern California volunteers staff wildfire relief efforts to help survivors with both immediate and long-term needs.

Photos courtesy of the United Way of Northern California

'THERE'S A PLACE FOR EVERYBODY'

Camp Fire survivor volunteers and helps others still getting back on their feet

BY ANNE STOKES

As the former Director of First Five Butte County, Yvonne McQuaid was familiar with what United Way could do for communities. When the opportunity arose for her to help the nonprofit put down roots in Butte County again, she welcomed the opportunity.

"In Butte County, we're always in such desperate need of resources and entities that are willing to partner and understand the dynamics of our rural county," she says. "I thought this would be great if I could help support them getting reestablished, of course never dreaming of what was going to happen eight months down the road."

Eight months later, McQuaid and her family were among the thousands who lost their homes in the Camp Fire. For nearly a year, she struggled to find stable housing. In that time, she says she was so impressed with how efficiently the nonprofit distributed much-needed funds to survivors — herself included — she volunteered to chair its Wildfire Relief Committee. She now helps distribute relief funds that enable individuals and families to get back on their feet.

"They make good use of their resources in a very fiscally responsible way," she says. "Our whole goal is to help people find some level of stability in their lives so that they can feel they're in a safe, healthy space, at

least for the time being, even as they continue to rebuild their lives on a long-term basis."

While United Way works with other nonprofits, county agencies and directly with survivors to meet immediate needs such as emergency shelter, food, clothing and more, the organization also addresses long-term needs like permanent housing.

"The effects of the fire are going to continue for years down the road," she says. "We've got our eye on immediate relief and support for families and what might be the need in two years, three years, five years down the road."

As a volunteer, McQuaid says she feels appreciated by United Way staff who value her experience and voice, something that makes volunteering her time a very rewarding and meaningful way to help her community heal.

"There's a place for everybody," she says. "I feel like I'm able to contribute something that really is helpful and that they rely on me and other volunteers for our connections to the community. ... I feel like I'm there making an important contribution and they're relying on me to make that contribution."

"I feel like I'm there making an important contribution."

YVONNE MCQUAID
Board member and Wildfire Relief Committee chair, United Way of Northern California

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

If you'd like to provide boots-on-the-ground support, United Way of Northern California has plenty of opportunities to volunteer your time:

- 1 HELP**
Talk with your employer about getting involved in the workplace giving campaign. Call us for details.
 - 2 SERVE**
Be a LIVE UNITED Ambassador and spread United Way's mission throughout your community. Join our Butte-Glenn advisory committee.
 - 3 CONNECT**
Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to find out about events and programs @norcalunitedway.
- i** For more information, visit bit.ly/UWNCvol or call 530-809-4663.

LIVE UNITED IN BUTTE AND GLENN COUNTIES

A Q&A with Larry Olmstead, president and CEO of United Way of Northern California

BY ANNE STOKES

? In what ways does United Way of Northern California assist the communities it serves?

We see our role as fighting for the education, income and health of all the residents in our communities and also to be there for our residents in times of crisis.

Part of United Way's traditional role is to provide funds to other nonprofits that align with our mission. (In) 2019 through 2020, we awarded \$250,000 to 31 different nonprofits in the area, including many in Butte County, to assist those nonprofits in carrying out their mission and work.

Last year, we reached over 40,000 residents in the north state with the direct service aspects of our programs. That would include 11,000 survivors of the wildfires, who we continue to serve in various ways in 2020. It also includes nearly 28,000 individual people who requested referrals through 2-1-1 NorCal.

? The Northern California chapter is unique in that you partner with local nonprofits and you issue grants directly to people in crisis.

We have decided to engage in direct-service assistance much more aggressively than other United Way (chapters because) in our region, we believe that it's called for. The nature of our rural north state, the population base being spread out ... we see a need to really engage our residents in an up-close and personal way.

? What can that direct assistance help with?

There's a wide range: Sometimes it's transportation, sometimes it's helping finance a mobile home they can stay in, septic systems, appliances, bedroom furniture ... anything to help people get back to where they were prior to the disaster.

Our concern in general is how do we help residents be on a positive path in terms of financial stability, because we know that income ends up being the determinant of almost everything that happens.

? What are United Way of Northern California's short- and long-term plans for the Butte County area?

We think it's so important that we have established a permanent office in Chico to serve Butte and Glenn counties. We're going to obviously continue to serve Camp Fire survivors and the community ... for as long as that recovery takes.

The next important step for us is to develop a community impact agenda (and establish) programs that more broadly serve the issues affecting Butte County.

? Why is it important to collaborate with other organizations like nonprofits and government agencies?

United Way's work is all about collaboration; we don't do anything alone. Any program that we operate, we're working with county agencies, we're working with state agencies, we're working with other nonprofits, we're reaching out to businesses and asking them to volunteer and support us. These kinds of issues that are the most complex and the most difficult to solve, no one agency can solve them. It requires folks to come together.

When agencies are trying to work by themselves, you're going to get duplication, you're not going to get the best ideas on the table, there's just no question that we're stronger together.



"We're going to obviously continue to serve Camp Fire survivors and the community ... for as long as that recovery takes."

LARRY OLMSTEAD
President and CEO, United Way of Northern California

United Way of Northern California has made a lasting commitment to Butte and Glenn counties, says President and CEO Larry Olmstead.
Photo courtesy of United Way of Northern California



UNITED WAY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

United Way of Northern California is committed to helping those in need, but can't do so without support from donors and volunteers. Since United Way is a 501c3 nonprofit, donations are tax deductible and can be specified for any particular cause such as the Camp Fire.

HOW TO DONATE

United Way of Northern California provides emergency cash grants to survivors and community partners. Donating is easy and can be done in several ways.



Online at
www.norcalunitedway.org



Text-to-donate
BUTTEFIRE to 91999



Businesses of all sizes can participate in the workplace giving campaign, which allows employees to donate as little as \$5 as a pre-tax portion of each paycheck.



Contact Desiree Gonzalez
dgonzalez@norcalunitedway.org, 530-809-4295.



"We are proud to partner with United Way of Northern California, especially in their quick response to the Camp Fire and providing vital support to the community. They continue to be a crucial part of the solution in addressing the overall needs of Camp Fire victims in Butte and Glenn counties."

GUILLERMO SANDOVAL
Director of Community Development
Tri Counties Bank



United Way of Northern California
Chico Office
2500 Floral Ave., Suite 20
Chico, CA 95973
530-809-4663

For information about the Stable Housing Opportunities Program (SHOP), call 530-276-8519.
Survivors living outside Butte County who want help connecting with a therapist can email campfireconnect@norcalunitedway.org for more information.

Redding Headquarters
2280 Benton Drive, Building B
Redding, CA 96003
Phone: 530-241-7521
Fax: 530-241-2053
www.norcalunitedway.org
Tax ID: 94-1251675