

Monterey County Fire Relief

Community Foundation for Monterey County Impact Report



Here for Good

Community Foundation
for Monterey County

Monterey County Fire Relief Fund Grantees

American Red Cross of the Central Coast
Recovery efforts for Monterey County fires

Big Sur Fire

Firefighter needs for the Dolan Fire: equipment repair and replacement, volunteer firefighter stipends and meals, fuel

Big Sur Grange

Fire cleanup and ADA access

Big Sur Land Trust

River Fire recovery at Marks Ranch (Salinas)

Big Sur Park School

Tuition assistance for students whose families were impacted by the fire

Cachagua Fire Protection District

Pagers and Personal Protective Equipment, firefighting clothing/protection and vehicle repair/maintenance, generator rental and fuel

Carmel Valley Kiwanis Foundation

Direct financial support for evacuees (food, housing and immediate needs)

Carmel Valley Rotary Club Foundation

Wood Chipper Day for Robles del Rio, Carmel Valley

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Monterey

Direct financial support for evacuees (food, housing and immediate needs)

Community Association of Big Sur

Direct financial support for evacuees (food, housing and immediate needs) and workers

Community Emergency Response Volunteers of the Monterey Peninsula

CERT training and PPE, financial assistance to families impacted by the Carmel Fire

Conservancy for the Range of the Condor

To repair firebreak the damage on Anastasia Canyon property



Los Padres National Forest

Rising Together – Monterey County Fire Relief

In the midst of a global pandemic came one of the most damaging wildfire seasons in California history. Monterey County was hit with three simultaneous blazes. The River Fire began burning August 16, 2020 and the Carmel Fire and Dolan Fire followed two days later, causing the loss of more than 117 structures and thousands of evacuations. Firefighters battled on multiple fronts and donors who had already given to COVID-19 responded once again to meet the new challenges.

Monterey County Fire Relief Fund

The Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) created the Monterey County Fire Relief Fund in August 2020 to provide a trusted vehicle for people to help their neighbors. The CFMC established the fund to assist communities affected by the three fires, and to facilitate giving for future fires.

Donations supported both immediate relief and recovery efforts. The fund has no fee, so 100% of contributions go to Monterey County nonprofits to support services and recovery.

People gave more than \$1.4 million combined for relief and recovery for three funds: the Monterey County Fire Relief Fund, the Community Fund for Carmel Valley and the Big Sur Disaster Relief Fund. The latter two funds of the CFMC made grants to benefit their specific regions.

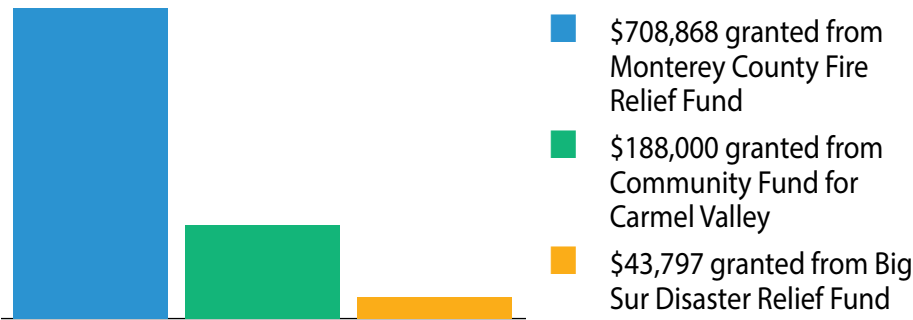
These two Community Foundation for Monterey County funds were at the forefront of fire relief this past fire season. This report features the work done to assist those who lost homes, needed immediate food and shelter or nonprofits affected by the fires.

Learn more or donate to provide relief for future fires at cfmco.org/FireRelief.

Nearly \$1 Million Granted

The CFMC was proud to be a philanthropic first responder, channeling support from individuals to all three funds addressing general and regional support. Nearly \$1 million has been granted from the Monterey County Fire Relief Fund, Community Fund for Carmel Valley and Big Sur Disaster Relief Fund.

\$940,665 Granted in 36 Grants



- \$1.35 million raised
- 1,264 gifts from \$5 - \$100,000 (see pages 7-11 for donor list)

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Monterey

When times are tough, it could be very hard to ask for help. The 2020 wildfires spared no socioeconomic groups favors, and Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Monterey was there to help.

“The wildfires effected a large range of people, those that needed help in different ways either being under insured, having lost a job or having lost everything,” said Ana Ventura-Phares, Executive Director. “The feeling was ‘I knew you have always been there, but now I need you,’” said Ventura-Phares who was among the evacuated.



Catholic Charities used a \$10,000 grant to provide direct financial help of pre-paid gift cards for people and families who were in the evacuation zones of the August wildfires. The cards were used for basic needs such as food, gas and clothing.

Staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities were entrenched in fire ravaged communities - assessing and prioritizing people who lacked renters’ insurance and those who could be eligible for FEMA benefits.

“We prioritized people who had significant loss to their homes and or their income was reduced or lost due to the wildfires,” she said.

The agency also screened those in need for eligibility for other Catholic Charities programs and offered referrals to additional service providing agencies.

Monterey County Fire Relief Fund Grantees *(continued)*

Foundation for Monterey County Free Libraries

Fire relief activities and supplies for evacuees

Friends of Cachagua Children’s Center

Grocery gift cards for Cachagua/Tassajara families

Hope, Horses & Kids

Evacuation operating support

Meals on Wheels of the Monterey Peninsula

Expansion of home-delivered meals program

MontereyCoRecovers Relief Fund

Basic needs

Monterey County Office of Emergency Services

Funding for Community Resiliency Coordinator

Monterey County Youth Museum

Relief support for evacuees with children/ organizational support

Salvation Army-Monterey Peninsula Corps

Direct financial support for evacuees (food, housing and immediate needs)

Ventana Wildlife Society

Rebuilding of the Condor Sanctuary



Community Fund for Carmel Valley Grantees

Friends of Cachagua Children's Center \$15,000

Provided food and gift cards for affected residents

Community Emergency Response Volunteers of the Monterey Peninsula (CERV) \$135,000

Distributed direct financial assistance to 21 families in Carmel Valley and Cachagua who lost their homes or sustained damage to their properties

CERV (second grant) \$38,000

To support six more families

"(Being a fund of the CFMC) has allowed us to grow and reach people who are already asking how they can help us prepare and fundraise for the next fire season."

— Alondra Valdez Klemek, Community Fund for Carmel Valley Advisory Board Member

Community Fund for Carmel Valley

The Community Fund for Carmel Valley (CFCV) has mobilized community. What started with an idea to unite and support the needs of Carmel Valley has turned into home-grown philanthropy of neighbor helping neighbor.

"It's a special mix of people bringing their skill sets that make this fund all about community," said CFCV Advisory Board Member Alondra Valdez Klemek, who is part of an extended family of firefighters. She and many others helped organize getting food to the fire lines and community last August.

When the Carmel Fire broke out board leadership was already looking to make fire safety a funding priority. Within hours, board members and volunteers set up at the Community Center. Calls were made. Social media posts went out. Then pallets of salad, dozens of gift cards, snacks and food showed up for anyone in need.

"People were determined to help," Klemek said.

"Evacuees, those dealing with the loss of homes, people dealing with trauma. Community came out, tons of students came out looking to help. It was wonderful to see and experience that unity."



While fire response was the thrust of their latest work, the CFCV is planning their first general grantmaking cycle, and is building sustaining funds for future needs and emergencies.

"Being an affiliate fund of the Community Foundation, we are lucky to have the umbrella of the foundation, which is well known and trusted," Klemek said. "That helps us tremendously, it's allowed us to grow and reach people who are already asking how they can help us prepare and fundraise for the next fire season. People are motivated to get involved having seen what we can do and how we helped right away."

The Community Fund for Carmel Valley was created in early 2020. The mission is to protect and improve the quality of life for residents and support and foster the vibrancy of the Carmel Valley community. The fund is governed by a local advisory board whose role is to provide oversight, raise funds, define grantmaking priorities, and award grants. It is an affiliate fund of the CFMC.

Learn more or support the Community Fund for Carmel Valley at cfmco.org/carmelvalley.

Firefighter Loses Home, Gains Community

Last August 18, Ramon Ruelas rose at the usual time – 5:20 a.m. to feed his family’s menagerie of goats, horses and chickens. Then he put on his green correctional officer uniform. Like most mornings, he caught the sunrise over Carmel Valley as he left his wife, Angie, and three children sleeping on their 15-acre dream property – having recently moved from Seaside to a three-bedroom home in the Cachagua.

By sundown, it would all be gone. A vegetation fire fueled by incessant winds and near 100-degree temperatures ravaged through pastures and rugged ranch land, growing into the 6,905 acre-Carmel Fire. It burned for 19 days, destroying 73 structures and damaging seven more.

“I just knew there was a good possibility we’d lose it, our home. The fire was moving fast. It was the real thing,” said Ramon, who would witness its destruction. Changing from his green uniform into yellow wildland fire gear he raced home in 40 minutes (it usually takes an hour) to join fellow Cachagua volunteer firefighters beating back flames for the next 48 hours. Several fellow firefighters also lost their homes.

New to the Valley, the Ruelas family was worried how they would ever recover. But in Carmel Valley strangers hugged him and gave his wife gift cards at the grocery store and the gas station. The Community Fund for Carmel Valley, an affiliate fund of the CFMC, took the lead to help 27 families by raising \$224,000 and granting \$188,000 to nonprofits to provide emergency relief to those in need. Ramon bought a new work uniform thanks to the grant.

“We are very grateful and honored – my wife and I work for everything and are usually on the other side, helping others. For strangers to care about us shows there is humanity out there, it’s here in Carmel Valley.”

With funds from the Community Fund for Carmel Valley, Ramon also bought a water tank. His family is working on plans to rebuild, living on their property for now in a trailer they bought with money raised for them by the community.

“We will get back to where we were, there’s bigger things in store for us. We are here today, very grateful to our community who check in on us, even now, months after we lost everything material. We gained a community.”



“We are here today, very grateful to our community who check in on us, even now, months after we lost everything material. We gained a community.” — Ramon Ruelas



Big Sur Disaster Relief Grantees

\$43,797 Granted

Big Sur Grange

\$30,000 (two grants)

Fire cleanup and ADA access

Big Sur Park School

\$38,106 (two grants)

Tuition Assistance

Ventana Wildlife Society

\$45,000 (two grants)

Rebuilding the Condor Sanctuary

Community Emergency Response Volunteers of the Monterey Peninsula (CERV)

\$18,375 (two grants)

CERT training and PPE (Big Sur)

*The Big Sur Disaster Relief Fund is part of the
Weston Call Fund for Big Sur, a special purpose
fund of the CFMC.*

Big Sur Disaster Relief Fund

In Big Sur, the Dolan Fire burned 40,000 acres and led to evacuations, close calls for firefighters in its path, closed roads, impacted businesses and concern that the burn scars would mean mudslides in the winter.

Funds from the Monterey County Fire Relief Fund went to supplies for Big Sur Fire and the Community Association for Big Sur (CABS), among others. The CABS grant provided immediate assistance, as the association was on the front lines helping community, including raising funds for firefighters who found themselves flanked by the fast-moving fire at Nacimiento Road. Firefighters survived in their self-deployed shelters after the Nacimiento Ranger Station exploded. Grants helped families of the injured firefighters.

Big Sur Disaster Relief Fund grants complimented these emergency assistance grants, with support for nonprofits including California condor nesting sites in the fire's path. Ventana Wildlife Society focused on the survival of newborn chicks nesting in fire-prone trees and missing birds. The condor sanctuary and research facility was destroyed and a grant helped in rebuilding efforts.



Big Sur Grange

The Big Sur Grange Hall received a grant to clean it of ash and safety improvements.

The Big Sur Grange has been a meeting place and center of Big Sur community since its construction in the 1950s. But being in a fire-prone area and the shut down of business due to the Covid-19 pandemic meant serious economic and physical deteriorations.

A \$20,000 grant from the Big Sur Disaster Relief Fund aided in cleaning ash/soot and providing access to the building for those with disabilities. Operating public events such as weddings and meetings in a fire prone area also increased liability insurance.

"The Grange Hall is one of those places that everyone loves, and just assumes will always be there," Grange board member Kendra Morgenrath said.



Learn more or build funds for future relief efforts at cfmco.org/BigSur.

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— Alan Crockett, Community Fund for Carmel Valley
Advisory Board Chair



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Gifts to the **Monterey County Fire Relief Fund** will be used for recovery and future fire relief efforts.

Gift to **Community Fund for Carmel Valley** "Fire Relief" will go to nonprofits assisting those impacted by the 2020 fires and future fires and disasters.

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Call 831.375.9712 or visit our website to learn more. cfmco.org/FireRelief

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May 2021