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**Four United Ways Launch Greater Bay Area Central Coast Wildfire Relief Fund**  
*Donations will benefit affected residents in 15 counties*

SAN FRANCISCO (August 31, 2020)— Four local United Way organizations have joined forces to create the [Greater Bay Area Central Coast Wildfire Relief Fund](#) which will provide immediate and long-term recovery assistance to Bay Area and Central Coast residents affected by the wildfires that spread throughout the region this month. Working together, [United Way Bay Area](#), [United Way of the Wine Country](#), [United Way Monterey County](#) and [United Way of Santa Cruz County](#) will assist residents and community agencies in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma, Santa Cruz, Monterey, Mendocino, Lake, Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

"As local United Ways, the strength of our network allows for us to be able to come together to work across our region during times of challenge and need," said Kevin Zwick, CEO of United Way Bay Area. "Providing relief and helping communities recover will be needed today and in the future as we fight the fires which continue to be an ongoing issue in California."

Funds collected will be applied to immediate and long-term recovery assistance for residents affected by the wildfires, with an initial focus on providing housing assistance (vouchers or cash), cash assistance to displaced families and other identified immediate needs.

Lisa G. Carreño, president/CEO of United Way of the Wine Country said, "The growing fire emergency and its impacts on vulnerable families, seniors, children, people with disabilities and special needs, low- and moderate-income earners, immigrants and the undocumented who are already struggling to stay afloat, demand United Way's attention. Through our own initiatives and relationships with trusted community partners, United Way of the Wine Country is committed to making fire relief and recovery investments that will build resilience among those fire survivors and evacuees who are often left out of other relief efforts while also addressing their immediate and short-term needs."

The four United Ways will share resources based on mutual assessment of local needs and the opportunity to fill gaps in services and leverage other philanthropic resources. They will make decisions on fund distribution with equitable insights from community members and partners.

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“My heart aches seeing the devastation the CZU Lightning Complex Fires has caused to our picturesque Santa Cruz Mountain Community,” said Keisha Browder, CEO of United Way of Santa Cruz County. “But, when I visit the shelters and see the many restaurants and businesses pull together to truly help our neighbors, I am reminded that we are what makes this community picturesque. We, the people of Santa Cruz County, are just as strong and resilient as the redwoods that surround us. Nearly 30 percent of our County population had to evacuate, and we will rebuild stronger than ever to welcome back 77,000 people into our community.”

United Way relief efforts are expected to include providing basic needs services to individuals and assisting non-profit agencies serving vulnerable populations with new or expanded roles in disaster relief. Long-term recovery support may include food and rent assistance to help people who have lost employment, case management services and mental health counseling.

United Way Monterey County president and CEO Katy Castagna noted, "Our community is known for hospitality, and support from the relief fund will be used to provide needed support for residents and community services most impacted by the River, Carmel, and Dolan fires. Donations to this fund reflect our regional interconnectedness and spirit of caring."

*Donations to the Greater Bay Area Central Coast Wildfire Relief Fund can be made at <https://uwba.org/wildfirerelief/>*

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