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Funds for fire victims helping to pay for lost wages, business.

By Kim Beltran

Hundreds of thousands of dollars donated for local fire victims have begun flowing to those in need.

Money raised through the Napa Valley Community Foundation, Rotary District 5130 and the Calistoga Firefighters Association is being distributed by the UpValley Family Centers.

"The majority of requests we have been receiving are for helping people to pay for housing expenses or other bills due to reduced work hours/lost employment/lost business," said Jenny Ocon, executive director of the UpValley Family Centers. "We have assisted a smaller amount of people who have lost their homes or property as a result of the fires." Millions of dollars in donations have poured in from all over the country to help victims of several North Bay wildfires that struck almost simultaneously in October.

The UpValley Family Centers began its fire relief work with donations from the Napa Valley Community Disaster Relief Fund, managed by Napa Valley Community Foundation and created with a \$10 million lead gift from Napa Valley Vintners following the 2014 Napa Earthquake. Additionally, UpValley Family Centers received grants from the Latino Community Foundation and the S.H. Cowell Foundation, as well as individual and corporate donations for its fire relief and recovery program.

With those funds, UpValley Family Centers has been able to rehome a family that lost its housing in the fire, as well as provide 290 other households with emergency financial assistance, said Ocon.

The executive director said the average per household grant given so far has been \$1,000.

Locally, the Calistoga Firefighters Association has raised \$322,303 to be used to help fire victims living in the 94515 zip code.

Those funds have begun going out as well, Ocon said.

People who live in the 94515 zip code can provide proof of residence, including those facing financial hardship and those who have lost property as a result of the fires should call the UpValley Family Centers at 707-965-5010 to schedule an appointment with a case manager.

"We are taking appointments effective immediately, and will continue to take appointments in the coming month," Ocon said. "We ask that if a caller gets our voicemail, to please leave a message with their contact information and we will call them back."

Rotary District 5130, which includes Calistoga, has raised just over \$1.4 million including \$1 million from Redwood Credit Union specifically for business recovery grants.

According to Calistoga Rotarian Kevin Eisenberg, the service club has given \$10,000 to UpValley Family Centers to provide emergency funds and services to individuals and families impacted by the fire.

Eisenberg said his organization has so far distributed \$20,000 in business recovery grants in the 94515 zip code with several more pending.

In addition, another \$92,000 in grants has been given out, he said, and "at least 100 additional grants are in the pipeline."