



United Way of Ventura County

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Chris Davis/Angel Pacheco 805-687-3322

On the One Year Anniversary of the Thomas Fire, United Way of Ventura County Reflects on Community Support

Ventura, CA, Nov. 30, 2018 – December 4th marks the one-year anniversary of the Thomas Fire and United Way of Ventura County looks back on a year of loss, hope and recovery.

“This Anniversary is a solemn and painful one,” said Eric Harrison, CEO, United Way of Ventura County. “While our hearts go out to so many that were affected in our communities, we were and are grateful for the opportunity to provide direct financial assistance to most of those impacted through the United Way Thomas Fire and Flood Fund.”

Shortly after the blaze began, United Way of Ventura County established a fund to assist impacted residents and soon joined efforts with United Way of Santa Barbara County. The fund went onto be reestablished as the United Way Thomas Fire and Flood Fund and raise \$4.6 million.

“The response from near and far in support of the Fund was overwhelming and so meaningful,” said Harrison. “People wanted to help in any way they could. We even received over 6,000 text and online donations through our mobile giving campaign.”

In Phase I of disbursement, United Way distributed prepaid credit cards through American Red Cross \$375,000. Each prepaid card was for \$500 and went to residents whose homes were destroyed by the Thomas Fire, without any income limits.

As part of Phase II, United Way distributed \$779,520 to 281 applicants who requested individual hardship assistance and an additional \$300,000 in assistance via pre-loaded bank cards to 212 immigrant farm and service workers affected by the fire assisting more than 1,000 family members. Eligible applicants for both were Ventura County residents, and household income limits were determined by family size of 120% AMI or less.

In Phase III, United Way sent \$1,500 from the Thomas Fire and Flood Fund to 527 households whose homes were destroyed or majorly damaged, as classified by FEMA and CAL FIRE. This phase could potentially exceed \$1 million.

In the current Long Term Recovery Phase IV, United Way is working with the Long Term Recovery Group and their case management process to assist households who do not have adequate personal resources for basic needs because of the disaster. This includes assessment and verification of need, planning to achieve recovery goals, advocacy, and connecting clients with community support.

“We know that the Long Term Recovery Group is best positioned, along with other partnering groups, to direct the disaster case management to provide the support needed in long term recovery,” said Harrison. “We’ve designated approximately \$1 million from the Thomas Fire and Flood Fund for the Long Term Recovery efforts to address these needs.”

Another \$1.1 million has gone to United Way of Santa Barbara County to assist in the recovery efforts of our neighbors.

About United Way of Ventura County

Since 1945, United Way of Ventura County has advanced the common good by creating opportunities for a better life for all. Our focus is on education, income and health, because these are the building blocks for a good quality of life. We support local services and programs that are more than just ‘stop gap’ measures, but rather solutions that help create lasting change. We invite everyone to be part of the change by giving, advocating and volunteering. When we work together in common purpose, we LIVE UNITED. For more information about United Way of Ventura County, visit www.vcunitedway.org.

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