

# 1989 Watsonville City's quake

## relief fund tops \$800,000

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1-13-90 RP

Nearly three months after the earthquake, checks, money orders, and an occasional box of warm clothing are still coming into Watsonville for the city's earthquake relief fund. Earlier this week, the total received by the city was \$836,696.

The pace has slowed considerably since the first few post-quake weeks, when Finance Director Terry Stigall was taking 40 or 50 checks to the bank each day, but Watsonville is obviously on people's minds. To his surprise, Stigall said, the city's still getting between five and 12 checks daily.

A box from Hawaii, loaded with baby supplies, recently arrived at City Hall. The city hasn't been accepting that type of donation for months now, and passed the box on to a family that city staffers knew was in need, Stigall said.

Most of the checks have been small — some as little as \$5 —

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and have come from people rather than organizations. By this week, a total of 3,580 donors had sent money.

The city asked people to stop sending clothes and supplies a few weeks after the earthquake because it had received far more than it could handle.

Stigall said that at one point the city had 90,000 square feet of donated goods. That amount has dropped considerably, but the city still has two warehouses full of the donated supplies. Earlier this week, the City Council approved an agreement to give Goodwill Industries the donations in return for \$5,000 worth of Goodwill gift certificates, which will be given to various social service agencies.

Most of the money has come from people and organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, said Stigall, "and quite a few from around here sent money, people who said, 'We feel sort of bad — our home was OK.'"

Money came in from people in more than 30 states and from Canada and Japan. Canadians sent \$100; the Japanese sent \$5,372. After California, Nevada and New York sent the second

and third highest amounts for the different states, \$50,000 and \$12,930 respectively.

Groups throughout the state who have made donations are as diverse as the American Physicians of Indian Origin, the Pakistani Engineers and Scientists Association, the Dump Truck Association, several American Legion groups, Signal Hill Police Officers Association, and The Men's Garden Club. Our Lady of Grace School Lunch Program in Brooklyn sent \$100.

Many church groups made donations, along with 25 offices of the Board of Realtors and several real estate agencies throughout the state.

The city has made three grants from the Disaster Relief Fund. It has given \$211,000 in a matching grant to the Housing Authority for a project that will construct 16 housing units for the poor in Watsonville. Another grant of \$36,000 went to the Interfaith Satellite Shelter Program for a van to be used to take the homeless to the National Guard Armory on cold nights.

The only grant to an individual so far went to a person who lost his house, which had been up on jacks awaiting a new foundation when the quake hit, and his 4-month-old business. The city gave

him \$20,000.

The funds are available to people who were residents of Watsonville Oct. 17 and to business owners, including land owners, who have property in Watsonville. Applicants have to prove their residency and that they suffered losses as a result of the earthquake. They also have to show that those losses are not covered by insurance and that they have made applications to the different federal and state agencies offering disaster assistance funds — and have been denied help.

"We're really the agency of last resort," said Stigall, explaining that the city is concerned with helping those people who are "falling through the cracks" in the other programs.

It takes a long time to get through the application process with all of the agencies, Stigall said, which is the reason why only three city grant applications have been approved so far.

The money can be used for food, clothing, temporary transportation needs, and short-term utility payments, minor home and mobile home repairs, business losses, repairs to rental units and for matching funds for other grants which will provide needed services to the city's residents.

Applications are available at the city's Finance Department at City Hall.