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Nearly Half-Million Dollars Dispersed

Disaster Relief Fund Office Closes

The Santa Cruz County-wide Citizens' Disaster Relief Committee closes its office doors Friday after four months and hundreds of thousands of dollars in relief work.

The committee formed in late January, with a goal of raising \$1 million for victims of this winter's devastating storms. Committee director Stephanie Hauk said Friday that nearly a half-million in cash and more than \$400,000 in in-kind services and materials have been donated and dispersed.

By the day's end, some 600 families will have received cash help; in addition, at least 100 families have received services.

"None of the money collected went to administrative costs or salaries," said Hauk. "Two separate grants covered that portion."

The Packard Foundation donated \$5,000 and the Cowell Foundation gave

\$20,000 to pay two full-time workers and two part-time workers.

Any funds remaining from these grants, which Hauk estimated could be as much as \$10,000, will go into the relief fund.

There are still 100 families with applications on file who have not received assistance, she said, and the committee will continue to accept donations and disperse them to victims. If the remaining families receive the \$1,000-limit grant, then Hauk hopes to be able to go back and help those who suffered total destruction.

"It's not much at all, really," she said. "Nine hundred thousand seems like a tremendous amount of money, but it pales when you look at \$56 million in private property damage alone, not counting vehicles. When you look at those figures, you realize how small it is."

The psychological help often outweighed the financial help, she said.

"Somebody cared enough to add them the check."

Hauk said the community was "tremendous, magnificent" for the help given.

"The committee never functioned as a committee that belonged to the people who attended the meetings. It belonged to the community, to whoever donated."

More than 50 fund-raising events took place, many of them with little or no help from the committee proper.

"We didn't even know about a lot of them until they gave us the check," she said.

She singled out for praise UCSC, where the students, faculty and staff raised more than \$50,000 in cash and in-kind donations.

Local clubs raised more than \$20,000 locally and nationwide; churches gave more than \$15,000 in cash and \$70,000 in in-kind services; the volunteer bureau gave nearly \$9,000 in administrative and

office help; volunteers from Soledad State Prison donated \$30,000 in labor since the storm, and the business people of the community raised approximately \$85,000.

In the Retailers Day Sale alone, businesses raised \$20,000.

Overall, businesses raised approximately \$85,000 for the committee.

Community leaders emerged from the crisis, she said, and were "just magnificent doing the day-to-day organizing."

"Some of the people who first helped others later became victims themselves. There has been a tremendous sense of cooperation throughout the county, and a sense of solidarity within the community. Relationships and structures have formed that will be there if the need ever arises again.

"As a community, I think we've learned a lot about how to help ourselves."