

# Opinion

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Sentinel

## Sentinel Editorial

# County Citizens Who Cared

The more than \$41,000 raised in KSBW Channel 8's Disaster Relief Telethon put the capper on the most heartwarming and successful money-raising campaign ever in Santa Cruz County.

Never before has there been a greater need for neighbor to help neighbor than the period following the disastrous Jan. 3-5 storm which claimed 22 lives and caused millions of dollars worth of property damage.

And never before has there been a greater response from our citizenry to help one another.

Within two weeks after that horrible storm, private citizens got together to organize a Santa Cruz Countywide Disaster Relief Committee that would put action into words that so often are caught up in the proverbial "red tape."

By the first part of February, the relief committee had dispersed the first of hundreds of thousands of dollars to many people who understandably believed there was no hope.

This community effort continued to gain momentum until nearly \$570,000 in cash and another \$400,000 of in-kind contributions were donated by individuals, businesses and organizations who somehow wanted to tell their fellow county resident, "We care."

Among those in-kind contributions were the thousands of sand bags rushed to the doors of homes by private individuals, heavy equipment provided by businesses to literally dig out homes and cherished possessions, and public agencies such as UCSC who printed much-needed mailouts at minimal cost and provided other services.

That didn't include the thousands of hours worked by law enforcement and fire department professionals and other neighbors who stayed up long hours and performed tedious tasks to see that damage wouldn't become even more catastrophic. Always at the ready were organiza-

tions such as the Salvation Army, Red Cross and numerous churches.

Many businesses outside of the construction industry, such as The Sentinel which raised nearly \$36,500 from sales of its 100-page "Storm of '82" book, put in that "something extra" to keep the effort going.

There had to be a nucleus for a success story to follow such a tragedy.

That core was the Santa Cruz Countywide Citizens Disaster Relief Committee under the direction of Chairman Al Castagnola.

He was assisted by Vice-Chairman Jack Baskin, an executive committee comprised of John Prieskorn, Reese Davis, Anne Leonard, Bert Muhly, Elena Baskin and Dick Pollock, plus some 100 committee members. This group, along with director Stephanie Hauk and administrative assistant Kathy Chasteen, in a crisis situation put together the greatest fund-raising (and necessary) effort Santa Cruz County has ever seen.

It concluded with Tuesday night's telethon and committee officials reported that the monies raised in that nine-hour telecast in essence will fill out the applications on file for a multitude of necessities.

With a thorough, citizen-based review process, and with the help of clearing houses such as the county Seniors Council, more than 650 individuals and families in dire need were given between \$50 and \$1,000 in cash donations to get back on their feet in the shortest possible time.

The "Storm of '82" was the most serious disaster ever witnessed by Santa Cruz County residents, and those people who wanted to help responded in kind.

We applaud those who donated time and money to avert a disastrous situation from becoming worse. We believe the response shows our community has a lot of character and compassion.

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