

# Jewish Community Disaster Fund

## LOOKING FORWARD

Ongoing assistance is still needed for the most vulnerable populations such as displaced migrant workers, seniors and those on low or fixed incomes. Relocation, rebuilding and current economic conditions create additional financial burdens.

The rebuilding is not over; in fact, for many it has just begun. Just four percent of the fire victims in our region have rebuilt or replaced their homes. The remainder are still in the planning process or are awaiting necessary information or action from insurance companies and others.

The slow pace of progress is not unexpected. The survivors of the 2003 fires took an average of three years to complete their rebuilds. JFS staff estimates that support and assistance will be needed until 2010. The most vulnerable – including displaced migrant workers, seniors, and those on low or fixed incomes – may require even more time.

To request a copy of the full Jewish Community Disaster Fund report or for questions, please contact:  
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The economic recession has significantly exacerbated many of the needs. Additional financial burdens include a lack of access to credit, increasing costs of supplies and permits, and fewer jobs and opportunities for income.

**Thanks to your generosity, the Jewish Community Disaster Fund will enable the individuals and families impacted to rebuild and thrive through counseling and case management and special grants for tools of livelihood.**



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# Jewish Community Disaster Fund

## A YEAR LATER



### SAN DIEGO COUNTY FIRES



On October 22, 2007, the Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego, United Jewish Federation of San Diego County and Jewish Family Service of San Diego established the Jewish Community Disaster Fund (JCDF) to collect donations and meet the needs of thousands of San Diegans whose lives were devastated by the firestorms of 2007.

Seven fires raged in the county of San Diego, to the north, east, and south which displaced nearly half a million people and resulted in an estimated \$2 billion in damages. Our community rapidly mobilized, responding to both the initial needs, anticipating future needs and preparing accordingly.

**The San Diego Jewish community extends its thanks to the Jewish Community Disaster Fund's donors for trusting our community to use your contributions wisely and effectively.** All funds have been and will be used solely to provide life-saving assistance. This report details relief provided to date and outlines plans for the future.

### The Jewish Community Disaster Fund:

San Diego Jewish organizations collaborated to offer nonsectarian relief

- ★ Provided immediate relief to survivors of the fires including food, gas, shelter and clothing
- ★ Helped eligible survivors obtain financial assistance from FEMA, insurance payouts, and grants from other organizations
- ★ Retained case workers to identify and reach out to vulnerable populations, particularly in rural areas
- ★ Supported clients with regular and proactive communications, mentors from 2003 fires, special events and free expert resources
- ★ Provided short, mid and long-term direct financial relief
- ★ Continues to help with long-term recovery including counseling, insurance claims, rebuilding efforts and grants to help survivors be self sufficient



The Jewish community designated Jewish Family Service of San Diego (JFS) as the lead agency to provide services in the aftermath of the fires. With the support of the Jewish Community Disaster Fund (JCDF), JFS was able to provide immediate services to those most in need. JFS has a strong reputation and experience in providing disaster relief service to Jewish and non-Jewish fire victims.

- ★ JFS engaged four case managers – 2.5 of whom are funded by JCDF – as well as a full-time program assistant and a part-time volunteer and communications coordinator.
- ★ JFS has worked with 430 families or nearly 1,250 individuals. JFS continues to work with almost 200 families, including 78 Jewish individuals, on an ongoing basis. There are new families each month.
- ★ 299 families have received financial assistance of some kind for a total of \$641,603
- ★ Many grants to fire victims were made jointly by American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Interfaith Community Services and JFS.

## JFS Provided Short-Term and Long-Term Financial Relief



- Mid and Long-Term Relief**  
 190 grants allowed those affected to return to self-sufficiency by funding the purchase of tools of livelihood.
- Support to Jewish Families**  
 In the two weeks following the fires, grants of \$1,800 each were provided to each of the 65 Jewish families whose homes were devastated by the fires.
- Short-Term Relief**  
 490 gift cards were distributed for groceries, gas and immediate needs.



## JFS Helped Arborist Resume Business After Total Loss

A San Diego arborist has been able to return to his tree trimming business and fix his home so that his sons can visit him without having to sleep on the floor. He has spent a long time just trying to get by, purchasing used equipment and staying in debt to his supplier while barely making his mortgage payments on a home that was severely damaged. He is a diligent worker who fell on hard times through no fault of his own. A grant from the JCDF played a large role in his recovery and helped him get back on his feet.

# THE JEWISH COMMUNITY DISASTER FUND:

Retirement communities, sisterhoods, youth groups, schools, individuals and families contributed



## SPOTLIGHT ON SENIORS

More than 500 of the 1,600 homes destroyed by the fires belonged to people over 65. JFS is one of only two organizations in San Diego with staff specifically devoted to the needs of seniors.

The primary challenges faced by the older adults include:

- Transportation and mobility issues in rural areas
- Infrastructure deficiencies addressing special needs for evacuation, transportation, temporary housing and medical conditions
- Navigation of a complicated and expensive rebuilding process
- Mental health issues including high instances of depression and anxiety
- Additional financial stress on fixed incomes

*One synagogue waived the membership dues for an elderly woman, recognizing that she was financially strapped and overwhelmed with fire-related paperwork at the same time as she had to place her husband in a nursing home.*