

COMMUNITY RECOVERY AND REBUILDING

A Joint Newsletter for the Fire-Affected Community of Southern Oregon



Commemorating the Almeda Fire: A Symbolic Action for Mourning and Healing

It has been a year since the Almeda Fire shook this valley to its core and devastated so many people's lives. The loss of homes, communities and businesses caused great trauma, distress and upheaval. September 8 will undoubtedly be a time for deep remembrance, solidarity, and healing for many in our community. When we are unable to be with others—particularly around anniversaries—it can help to create a ceremony of our own, in our own private space or sanctuary.

As Christine Hunter-Robinson from WinterSpring—a local organization that helps people move through trauma into resilience, asks: "Why would we commemorate an event such as this? Why revisit old pain and hurt?"

Many have found it difficult to release and process the emotions of last year. The grief is held inside, all the feelings of fear, hurt, pain, sorrow and disappointment. The grief needs to be expressed but it has been a time of overwhelm to simply survive, to get through, to seek a place to live, to work with insurers and different agencies, to keep going for the children. Grief does not listen, however, and cannot be silenced. Grief demands to be expressed and in order to heal, we must mourn. Mourning is an act of strength, to express outwardly the sorrow and deep sadness for all that has been lost. It is only with that expression that true healing begins and we can turn our energies into creating a new future.

For information on a fire loss support group, bereavement support or information on WinterSpring's community classes, please call: 541-552-0620 or send an email to info@winterspring.org

Welcome to the Almeda and Obenchain Fire Anniversary edition of Community Recovery and Rebuilding. This is a joint newsletter from the Jackson County Community Long-Term Recovery Group (JCC LTRG) and Reimagine & Rebuild Rogue Valley (R3V). These two coalitions include more than 40 agencies, organizations, and individuals working on our valley's recovery from the wildfires of 2020. Our goal is to keep the fire affected community up-to-date and to help with individual and community recovery by sharing available resources.

A Ceremony to Release Burdens and Grief

Hunter-Robinson has shared a very moving and valuable guide to creating your own personal space and ceremony to process the feelings that will inevitably come up around the anniversary:

- 1. Create your space.** It may be an altar with photos, memorabilia, candles. Allow yourself time and privacy for this activity. Let this be a symbolic farewell to the past year and an invitation to the infinite possibilities of a new year.
- 2. Light a candle to begin the ceremony,** it represents the light in the darkness. (If this is not comfortable for you, omit this action). You may like to write down all that you wish to let go of and release, all of the fears, pain and sadness, and the experiences that have been traumatic for you.
- 3. Sit quietly and focus on your breath,** take a few deep breaths and allow the stillness within to envelope you. It helps to speak out loud all that you perceive as the feelings of loss and grief in your heart. It is normal to want to stop the feelings that are painful, but allowing them to surface fully is deeply healing. Continue gentle breaths and when ready, visualise all you are choosing to create now, what is your dream? Hold to that. To draw this to a close, consider the things you are grateful for now in your life. Allow time to sit and simply be with this experience.

Creating a space for grief can be a powerful exercise, allowing yourself the opportunity to reflect on the past, process feelings and let go, so that you can move forward into something new. If emotions come up, honor that. It is all healing. Only by letting emotions rise to the surface of your awareness can you truly release.

Options for the Anniversary

Whether you feel up for an outing, or are inclined to stay home, here are a few ways to mark the anniversary while remaining Covid-safe:

- The **First Presbyterian Church** in Phoenix will be ringing their bell on **September 8 at 11:07am** to mark the exact time, one year earlier, when the first calls for help with the Almeda Fire went out to emergency responders. Masking and social distancing will be in effect.
- Everyone deserves a little something sweet! On **September 8**, the **Phoenix Grange** will be holding an outdoor Ice Cream Social to mark 1 year of resilience after the Almeda fire. House made ice cream sandwiches are available from **4-6pm** at **209 N. Main Street** in Phoenix. Fire survivors are invited to leave a written message or thought, see some neighbors, and acknowledge that we are still here growing, connected, and rebuilding. Please mask and social distance.
- One year on, where do we stand? A live virtual event will be held on **Tuesday, September 14 from 6:30-8:00pm**. **“Our Path to Recovery: A Report from District 5,”** will provide residents with an account of the progress of our recovery so far. Community partners, including the cities of Talent and Phoenix, the Talent-Phoenix School District, the Long-Term Recovery Group, the housing community, and others will share their perspectives on the past year as well as plans for the next phase of rebuilding and response. Folks can attend at this link: www.bit.ly/3zgRL8p

Recovery News

Jackson County Community Long-Term Recovery Group Establishes Unmet Needs Table

The Jackson County Community Long-Term Recovery Group (JCC LTRG) has established the Unmet Needs Table to provide the final resources that will enable the closure of survivor cases from Disaster Case Managers.

In the first month, several survivor cases have been closed. These include:

- A Spanish-speaking family wanted support to move back to the Talent park where they had previously lived, including a request for \$565 for the first month’s rent and relocation of the mobile home from the Southern Oregon RV Park. Their request —along with help setting up their kitchen and some additional material resources—was met with help from the Anna May Family Foundation, Heart Rising, the Teresa McCormick Center, and the Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day Saints.
- An HVAC system that a 72-year old Veteran needed for his newly purchased home was provided by United Way of Jackson County.

- A 64-year old woman with disabilities and the primary caregiver of her 90 year-old mom needed a refrigerator to close their case. St. Vincent de Paul and the Anna May Family Foundation split the cost of the refrigerator purchase, setup and delivery, while Lowe’s provided a 10% discount!

If you have questions about how to receive support from Disaster Case Managers or the Unmet Needs Table, please send an email to recover@JCCLTRG.ORG

MEMBERS OF THE UNMET NEEDS TABLE:

- AMERICAN RED CROSS
- ANNA MAY FAMILY FOUNDATION
- CARPENTER FOUNDATION
- CASCADE BUILDERS ASSOCIATION
- CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LATTER DAY SAINTS
- DISCIPLES OF CHRIST CHURCH
- HEARTS RISING
- JACKSON CARE CONNECT
- LEIGHTMAN MAXEY FOUNDATION
- ROGUE CLIMATE
- ROTARY AFTER 5
- THE SALVATION ARMY
- ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY
- UNETE/NOWIA
- UNITED WAY OF JACKSON COUNTY

Southern Oregon Rotary Has Grants to Replace Equipment Lost in the Fires

United Rotary Clubs of Southern Oregon, which represents approximately 600 Rotarians from all 10 clubs in Jackson County, has partnered with Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development Inc. to distribute more than \$160,000 in funds to small businesses and individual contractors.

These **Back to Work grants** are intended to help businesses replace uninsured tools or equipment lost in the fires. Grants of up to \$5,000 will be distributed to eligible applicants. Those interested in applying for the award should fill out the online application form available at www.rotaryrebuildssouthernoregon.com

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRE-AFFECTED COMMUNITY

Jobs for Fire Survivors, Helping Fire Survivors

Catholic Charities are still seeking to hire local **Disaster Case Managers** to help assist fire survivors in Jackson County. DCMs provide “direct case management services to disaster survivors and their families through advocacy, information and referral, crisis intervention services, and recovery services in the Jackson County area.” To learn more and/or apply, visit: catholiccharitiesoregon.applicantpro.com/jobs

ACCESS is hiring several positions to help fire survivors find new housing. They are looking for a Community Resilience Program Supervisor and Landlord Engagement Specialist, and others. To learn more, visit: accesshelps.org/career-opportunities

The **Zone Captains Program** is now hiring fire-affected survivors to connect with their previous neighbors, provide a pipeline for survivors into recovery networks, and gather needs assessments from individuals and families. The program is as a peer-to-peer social support program for fire-affected people to participate in community-led recovery efforts. More info can be found at www.zonecaptains.org

Other Job Opportunities:

- The **Red Cross** is looking for a full-time Disaster Program Manager. Qualifications: Minimum 5 years of related experience with building, mobilizing, leading and developing volunteer teams to execute a social services program or service. For more information: <https://g.co/kgs/it9bhF>



An important part of wildfire recovery is connecting with other fire-affected communities, to learn their lessons that can help us in a speedier, more resilient recovery. In early August, a group of six people from the JCC LTRG traveled to Paradise, California to connect with their recovery community. Some of their learnings—deeper community engagement, coordinated jurisdictional involvement, a center to support the rebuilding process, and the importance of coordinating short AND long-term recovery efforts—are already being incorporated into our Almeda Fire recovery work.

Are you a Good Listener? The Jackson County Community Long-Term Recovery Group (JCC LTRG) Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee is setting up opportunities for compassionate listening to help survivors of the Almeda and Obenchain fires with the emotional and spiritual challenges of recovering from these disasters. If you have certified training in emotional or spiritual support and are willing to be a compassionate presence, please contact us at: Care@JCCLTRG.ORG

Survivors Supporting Survivors, Neighbors Supporting Neighbors

In the Zone Captains weekly meetup, transformational conversations are taking place. Social Support, however informal, can be very valuable during the waiting game of recovery. The program is a peer-to-peer. Perhaps you are a single mom living with three children in a rental, longing to return to the community you lost, and needing someone to work through your feelings. Maybe you need a moving truck to help with your second move within the last year. These are actual examples of the kinds of conversations and connections that happen every week in the Zone Captains Meetup.

This is how the program works. Survivors step up to volunteer or become paid Zone Captains and help the people in their zone navigate permits, access grants, and conduct Needs Assessments that connect survivors to pipelines for recovery. Join us **Tuesdays 6-8pm on Zoom!** Sign up at www.zonecaptains.org to receive an invite.

Thank You "A" Street Print & Parcel!

"A" Street Print & Parcel at 258 A St. in Ashland is providing FREE Notary services and FREE mailboxes for Almeda fire survivors. Please call 541-552-0505 if you're a fire survivor and in need of these services. Thank you to "A" Street Print & Parcel for supporting our efforts and your community!



Zone Captain Helps Launch Pilot Project for Manufactured Home Grants

Did you have a manufactured home that burned? Could you use more funds in order to purchase a new one? Kathy Kali, the Zone Captain Program Coordinator, has been on the forefront of helping survivors from mobile home parks receive grants. Thanks to her hard work and advocacy, a pilot program is being run with manufactured homeowners from Bear Creek Mobile Home Park (her former neighborhood), and a few folks from other parks who needed to order their homes quickly.

A forgivable loan program through **Oregon Housing & Community Services**— which historically has helped manufactured home owners replace an older home with a newer one— is being retooled to help fire survivors locally. **This forgivable loan will provide \$35,000 for people who had a single-wide, and \$45,000 for double-wides.** It is not “boots-on-the-ground” yet, but officials in Salem indicate the full enrollment portal will be ready by Fall/Winter 2021. Send an email to coordinator@zonecaptains.org to find out more. NOTE: The loan is NOT retroactive, and people must obtain their “commitment letter” first before purchasing and installing their home.

We Would Love Your Feedback and Ideas

If you have links to community resources, wildfire recovery news, other info to share, thoughts, or questions that you'd like answered, please let us know at newsletter@jccltrg.org.