

THE ONLY LOCAL LAW FIRM EXCLUSIVELY PRACTICING WILDLAND FIRE LITIGATION IS HOSTING

A Townhall Meeting For Victims Of The
Camp Fire To Learn About The Law And
Ask Questions.

January 20, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.
Chico Masonic Lodge, 1110 W. East Ave,
Chico, CA 95926

We have handled 29 fires since 1988
and have been in Chico for over 25
years.

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Stewards of recovery

Three major groups form Butte Strong Fund to support long-term fire recovery efforts

In the days following the Camp Fire, donations from across the nation started pouring into a small foundation nestled in downtown Chico.

The Camp Fire Relief Fund swelled to over \$1 million seemingly overnight, allowing the North Valley Community Foundation (NVCF) to immediately distribute grants to organizations on the ground. That money provided shelter to evacuees, helped bankroll distribution centers overflowing with donated supplies and paid for thousands of dollars' worth of gift cards for people who lost everything.

That was the first phase of relief. Now, two months out, the organization has raised a total of \$25 million for the recovery effort, said President and CEO Alexa Benson-Valavanis.

"This business was built on the concept that humans are good and kind and generous," she said during an interview at the foundation's downtown office. "For me, it's just really heartening to see that that's true. Even now, two months later, we're still receiving contributions, we're still receiving crisis support ... from the region and from the nation."

In the next phase of its relief efforts, NVCF has joined forces with Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. and the Aaron Rodgers NorCal Fire Recovery Fund. Under the Butte

Strong Fund, they'll raise money and work together on larger, more long-term projects.

The fund is accepting letters of intent from any organization, group or government entity working in recovery with a meaningful project in mind, Benson-Valavanis said. These projects will have to align with one of the fund's six key focuses: housing, children and youth services, health and wellness, education, community and economic development, and business recovery.

"We want to hear every single idea imaginable," Benson-Valavanis said. "The Butte Strong Fund's role is to either kick-start [a project], or to help finish it off or be a meaningful player within it, but we want it to be collaborative."

NVCF will facilitate the grant application process, and Butte Strong Fund organizers will evaluate and make final decisions on the proposals that are received. For NVCF's portion of the fund, there will be a selection committee made up of an advisory board, with experts from the Ridge for each focus area, as well as NVCF staff.

Rodgers has raised \$3 million. Sierra Nevada projects it has raised \$10 million to \$15 million through its relief efforts, which include the collective brewing of Resilience IPA (see "Belly up to the bar," Chow, Dec. 13). Each will maintain

control over where its portion goes.

The bulk of what the brewery has raised will be dedicated to Butte Strong Fund efforts, according to Sierra Nevada spokeswoman Robin Gregory. The brewery anticipates focusing its efforts particularly on business recovery, housing and community development, she said.

"By joining forces with these great partners, we can significantly increase the positive impact on our community," brewery Vice President Sierra Grossman said in a press release. "The support of our global brewing industry has allowed us to support our Butte County community. It's been heartwarming to see the light of the human spirit shine through even the darkest of hours."

In Benson-Valavanis' perspective, housing is the most important need currently. NVCF is working to identify sites for temporary housing "because of the severity of this crisis and because we understand the limitations around federal funding."

However, they have encountered major barriers when it comes to finding suitable land, especially since the Ridge and other fire-charred areas still have to go through the debris removal process.

"If we could have 500 temporary houses built right now, we would," Benson-Valavanis said. "We have to work with so many different