

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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## **Santa Barbara Tea Fire Response Fund Update: Community Donations Total \$160,000 To Date**

**United Way of Santa Barbara County reports 400 individual donors to date, groups continue to fundraise to provide relief for long term impact of fire**

**Santa Barbara, CA, November 26, 2008**—United Way of Santa Barbara County is coordinating a fund to provide critical relief in the aftermath of the Tea Fire. The Santa Barbara Tea Fire Response Fund, which was established and announced in the two days after the fire has raised over \$160,000 to date from over 400 individual donors. 100% of the funds raised will be used to benefit survivors of the Tea Fire. People affected by the Tea Fire include students, renters, seniors, the uninsured, the significantly under-insured, families with young children, and others. Individuals and local and regional groups continue to respond with fundraising events scheduled in the coming weeks.

“While Santa Barbara has a reputation as one of the most philanthropic communities in the country, we are in awe of the momentum of this generosity to help our neighbors affected by the fire,” said Paul Didier, President and CEO of United Way Santa Barbara County. “Local agencies are stretched to respond to the immediate needs and there is still a long road ahead for many individuals and families to recover from this devastation.”

***Among many businesses and organizations to support Tea Fire Response Fund through upcoming events:***

- Ojai Valley Inn & Spa is offering assistance to its “neighbors” in Santa Barbara and Montecito who were adversely affected by the Tea Fire. The Inn will donate a portion of the proceeds from three already-scheduled holiday events at the Inn in November and December - the Thanksgiving Grand Buffet, Teddy Bear Tea, and New Year’s Eve Dinner/Dance. The Inn is also welcoming displaced fire survivors with a 50% room rate reduction.
- Other local – and some far away - organizations are holding events to benefit Tea Fire survivors through the Fund, including: Statement on State Street, California Pizza Kitchen, Sarr Coffee, and Barefoot Books. Santa Barbara High School students will be holding weekly concert and “Penny Drives” featuring their own award winning music and arts groups and other special guest performers.

United Way is working with community partners to identify and provide assistance for unmet needs of the affected families and we will be here for the long term to support the whole

community's recovery. Currently involved are: KEYT-TV, Santa Barbara Foundation, Santa Barbara Bank & Trust, Catholic Charities, Santa Barbara City Housing Authority, American Red Cross Santa Barbara County Chapter, Salvation Army, Family Service Agency, 2-1-1, Jewish Family Services, Cumulus Broadcasting, Rincon Broadcasting, Santa Barbara News-Press Radio, United Way of Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services, Cal-Volunteers, SBParent.com, Santa Barbara Association of Realtors, and more to be added.

### **Donation and volunteer opportunities information:**

- Online donation and mailing info at [www.unitedwaysb.org](http://www.unitedwaysb.org) or call 965-8591
- For potential volunteer opportunities related to fire response, go to [www.volunteersbc.org](http://www.volunteersbc.org).

In the days and months to come, longer-term recovery efforts will also be underway and in need of support. These services are best provided through coordinated efforts and it is critical that potential volunteers do not self-deploy. Please wait until there is a clear understanding of what volunteer resources will be needed and where.

**See below for Santa Barbara Tea Fire Frequently Asked Questions.**

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### **Santa Barbara Tea Fire Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. What is the Santa Barbara Tea Fire Response Fund (SBTFRF)?**

SBTFRF is a collaborative community response to assist people who have been negatively impacted by the devastating Santa Barbara Tea Fire of November 13 to 17, 2008. Response Fund Partners will assist in fund raising efforts as well as making grants and providing benefits to the individuals and families affected. Additionally, SBTFRF works with most public and private agencies involved in providing direct services to fire victims.

#### **2. Who is currently involved?**

KEYT-TV, Santa Barbara Foundation, Santa Barbara Bank & Trust, Catholic Charities, Santa Barbara City Housing Authority, American Red Cross Santa Barbara County Chapter, Salvation Army, Family Service Agency, 2-1-1, Jewish Family Services, Cumulus Broadcasting, Rincon Broadcasting, Santa Barbara News-Press Radio, United Way of Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services, Cal-Volunteers, SBParent.com, Barbara Association of Realtors, and more to be added.

#### **3. How much of my donation will be used to help fire victims?**

100% of your donation will be used only to benefit victims of the Tea Fire. All costs of the Fund will be paid from other sources.

#### **4. How will my donation be used?**

Donations will be used for categories of assistance such as: school supplies, home business, transportation, furniture, clothing, medical, counseling, living expenses, and housing.

People affected by the Tea Fire include students, renters, seniors, the uninsured, the significantly under-insured, young children families, and others.

The plan is for donated dollars to be used for providing direct services to affected individuals and families. Some donations will be made directly to individuals and families by professionals from the appropriate agencies. Some donations will be used to partially reimburse charities for extraordinary expenses incurred while serving Tea Fire affected people.

**5. Is there a screening process for determining eligibility?**

Yes. A two-tiered, public-private partnership will provide screening at the social worker/case manager level and an oversight committee of local leaders will provide direction and assurance that all monies are used appropriately.

**6. What kind of donations will be accepted by SBTFRF?**

Cash, check, debit card, & credit card. Until we are best able to determine the exact need of those affected, we will not be accepting material goods.

**7. What is the difference between SBTFRF and Red Cross?**

Every disaster and the people affected have short and long-term needs. The Red Cross is the first line of disaster response and relief. SBTFRF is concerned with the long-term community recovery and people rebuilding their lives. SBTFRF supports Red Cross efforts and Red Cross supports the longer term efforts of SBTFRF.

**8. How do I get more information?**

Call United Way of Santa Barbara County at 805-965-8591, or visit

[www.unitedwaysb.org](http://www.unitedwaysb.org).

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