

Mendocino-Rebuilding Our Community (M-ROC)

Long-Term Fire Recovery Committee



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“Pulling Down the Road Blocks to Recovery”

There are disruptions to daily life we can plan for, like a new baby or moving to a new house. Others sneak up on us but still allow for time to recalibrate, such as illness or being laid off. And then there are those disruptions that turn our lives upside down with no ability to plan, leaving us in the wake of loss, despair, and confusion. The October fires are such a disruption, but they impacted families and individuals already in the midst of life’s disturbances, compounding the devastation.

It is with the incredible generosity of our community through donations and other grant funds, that Mendocino-ROC has been able to step up and offer financial support to our neighbors to pull down the road blocks to recovery after the fires. By establishing a critical needs grant, the Mendocino-ROC case managers have been able to work with survivors across the spectrum to aid them in the process of recovery.

A young family with a toddler and a baby on the way were creating a life for themselves when the fire ripped them from their home and left them without shelter. A critical needs grant has paid for their deposit and first month’s rent. An elderly couple undergoing chemotherapy before the fires have been living in an unheated trailer through the winter months since losing their home. A critical needs grant has restored power to their property and the ability to heat their home. A father lost not only his home, but his landscaping business when his tools burned in the fire. A critical needs grant has helped him repurchase some of these tools, so he can earn an income again to support his family and rebuild his home.

Mendocino-ROC critical needs grants provide the opportunity to touch people from all walks of life begin the rebuilding process. The focus of these grants is to remove a barrier to stable housing for at least six months, but also includes important issues such as restoring the ability to earn income or restoring transportation to get children to school or parents to work. It allows us to assist in the restoration of utilities to properties that have been destroyed and offer an avenue to give aid for disaster-related medical costs.

To date Mendocino-ROC has allocated \$150,000 towards critical needs grants. These have proven to be a very real way in which we can touch people's lives and help them on the road to recovery.

We also listen for opportunities to maximize our funds through collaboration and discounts when survivors echo a similar need. The *M-ROC Power Pole Project* is one such need, offering survivors the opportunity to have a temporary power pole installed to restore power and return to their property. The *M-ROC Water Tank Project* is now in the planning phases. We have just opened up the *M-ROC Kids' Activities Project* that will provide grants to kids who were affected by the fire to help pay for art supplies, musical instruments, sports equipment, camp or other activities.

These are a just snapshot of the impact critical needs grants can have. Case managers have already reached out to over 70% of the 370+ families that lost homes and are making every effort to contact the rest, to learn how we can best support them.

Recovery comes in phases. In the beginning is the immediate response – from hotel and gas vouchers to food and clothing. Then recovery – supporting survivors as they undergo property cleanup and removing barriers to stable housing. This is where we are now. But even as we tend to the recovery needs, we must keep an eye towards the future. A delicate balance must take place between distributing funds to support survivors' recovery needs now while retaining resources to fund the rebuilding effort to come. Disaster recovery is a long-term commitment, and at five-months in we are still in the beginning stages. But through the support of our community we have begun to pull down the road blocks to recovery and lend a helping hand to our neighbors as they restore their lives.

For survivors that would like to learn more about the critical needs grants, power pole project or water tank project, contact the Mendocino-ROC Resource Room located inside the Ukiah Valley Conference Center, or by calling 707-621-8817.

For anyone interested in getting involved with Mendocino-ROC as a volunteer or community partner, please contact Rose Bell, Project Manager, at rosebellconsulting@gmail.com. To learn more you can also visit www.mendocino-roc.com