

Mendocino-Rebuilding Our Community (M-ROC)

Long-Term Fire Recovery Committee



Contact Rose Bell

Telephone 415-706-8989

Email: rosebellconsulting@gmail.com

Website: www.mendocino-roc.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2018

“Rebuilding Together: From Strangers to Friends”

Standing in the echoing gymnasium of Mendocino College, where “*Coming Home*,” a Mendocino-ROC supported rebuilding expo is in full swing, we witness friends meeting in warm embraces, offering care and guidance. Over 250 survivors have come to connect with resilient, affordable rebuilding options and to benefit from the collective wisdom of nearly twenty speakers. An attentive audience listens at the keynote stage on how to navigate the permit process, while a friend guides another who has lost their home to the Mendocino-ROC table to meet with a case manager and learn about the resources we can offer. Multi-generational families fill the footpath, passing a model ‘tiny home’ as they strategize on what they need to learn from the day. Old friends meet over the free food served from a Caribbean food truck and begin to share stories of survival.

Rebuilding extends beyond the brick and mortar experience – it is a warm embrace, it is someone else cutting through the red tape for you, it is sharing stories of strength and survival, believing in a new future that looks different than the one you may have once imagined. Rebuilding is feeling safe enough to lay down new roots, and strong enough to withstand the process. Mendocino-ROC endeavors to provide a warm hand to survivors navigating these many iterations of rebuilding.

A warm hand such as Hope Crisis Response Network, or “Hope City,” a Northern Indiana-based non-profit organization dedicated to rebuilding after disasters using volunteer labor is one such option. Hope City is working closely with Mendocino-ROC, County Planning & Building Services, and other community stakeholders to offer an affordable construction option for survivors. Hope City has been integral to the rebuilding efforts in Lake County after the Valley Fire of 2015 and are bringing their same dedication to recovery to Redwood Complex Fire survivors. By utilizing volunteer labor and strategic material discounts, Hope City can offer pre-designed ‘stick-built’ homes at an affordable cost to survivors identified through the Mendocino-ROC case management process. These efforts are only achieved through the incredible labor of volunteers, near and far. As we ramp up to break ground on the first homes in Redwood Valley we are putting out a call for local volunteers. If you or someone you know is interested in

helping rebuild homes, please contact Gabe at gabe@hcrn.info or visit <http://hcrn.info/volunteer> to learn more and sign up.

The power of volunteer labor and donated supplies can have a big impact. For survivors ready to sink their hands into the earth and begin the process of regrowth, *Operation Garden Box* is delivering garden boxes to survivors wishing to start their spring gardens. The brainchild of Danilla Sands, who runs the MendoLake Complex Fire Relief - Ukiah Unit, Operation Garden Box follows on the heels of Operation Mailbox as a simple act of community coming together to offer support which can make a big difference for survivors seeking a way to move forward.

Rebuilding is a community effort, but one can feel isolated even within a community, especially for renters who lost their homes and are not rebuilding in the literal sense. The rental vacancy rate for the area has been hovering near 1%, even dropping to a negative rate since the fires, offering little opportunity for renters to find new homes. Mendocino-ROC convened a special meeting of community partners to discuss opportunities for renters. While some solutions presented themselves, we are still seeking available rentals. For homeowners interested in renting to fire survivors, please contact rentalsforsurvivors@gmail.com. For survivors in need of housing contact Case Management at 707-621-8817 to discuss possible options.

We have been honored to witness the progress of recovery day-to-day as we create resources and guide survivors in need through the recovery and rebuilding process. Mendocino-ROC is over 80 members strong, a network of neighbors helping neighbors, strangers becoming friends, building a new community from the ashes.

To learn more about Mendocino-ROC, or to get involved, visit www.mendocino-roc.com.