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**Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund Eclipses \$1 Million Mark**

*Fund Established to Assist Those Affected by Beachie Creek and Lionshead Fires*

(STAYTON, Ore., October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020) – In just over a month, the Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund has raised over \$1.7 million. The fund, established by Santiam Hospital’s Service Integration Team (SIT), is intended to provide immediate and long-term relief to individuals and families affected by the wildfires that ravaged the Santiam Canyon overnight on September 8.

“The outpouring of support has been incredible,” says Terry Fletchall, CEO of Santiam Hospital. “The fact that we’ve been able to raise this much in such a short time is a testament to the spirit of generosity in our community and across the state. It also speaks to the affection that so many people have for our region. Volunteers are mobilized and we are already putting the contributions to work to help our neighbors affected by the disaster.”

To centralize relief efforts, the Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund has opened two resource centers where displaced residents can go for assistance: the **Anthony Hall Wildfire Resource Center** (11758 Sublimity Rd Sublimity, Ore.) is open Monday – Friday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The **Gates Community Church Resource Center** (40070 Gates School Road, Gates, Ore.) is open Thursday – Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. The Gates location is also serving free hot meals prepared by volunteers from Silverton Lions Club and Silverton Elks Lodge #2210. Lunch is served from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and dinner is served from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. (Hours at both locations are subject to change based on need.)

Since the disaster, SIT has connected with 408 households in the Santiam Canyon to distribute donated emergency supplies such as food, clothing, toiletries, fuel cards, pet and livestock feed, says Melissa Baurer, SIT’s Community Liaison Coordinator. Funds also have been used to assist families and individuals with short-term housing, rental move-in expenses and with immediate needs such as the replacement prescriptions, eye glasses and dentures that were left behind as residents fled their homes. Since opening, the Gates Community Church location has been serving 400 meals each day and 100 households have “shopped” the store daily.

More than 200 volunteers have been mobilized to sort donated items, prepare meals, staff the resource centers and otherwise help those seeking assistance.

“SIT has an established network of partners and volunteers who have hit the ground running,” says Baurer. “The Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund is utilizing and building on these ties to receive and distribute support to local residents who need it most.”

To that end, the Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund is collaborating with government and social service agencies to provide evacuees with information and access to all of the resources that are available. The fund is working closely with both Linn County and Marion County Commissioners offices to ensure that FEMA representatives are on site at the resource centers to help families complete registration forms for disaster relief. Marion County Health and Human Services also will be onsite. The Santiam Outreach Center of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA-SOCC) has committed one full time staff member to work at the Gates Community Church Resource Center and the Linn-Benton Lincoln ESD has committed staff to help complete evacuee forms remotely.

With emergency short-term relief efforts underway, Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund is also working with Salem Economic Development Corporation (SEDCOR) and local legislators to mobilize support for the next steps of cleanup and rebuilding.

“Our job is just getting started,” says Deana Freres, a community member taking the lead on these efforts. “We recognize that relief and recovery will be ongoing for months and stretching into years, so we are in this for the long term. We are looking forward to partnering with donors, volunteers, local businesses and government agencies that are ready to do the hard work of rebuilding our affected communities.”

#### **HOW TO DONATE**

Santiam Canyon Wildfire Relief Fund is a 501 c 3 organization. All donations are tax-deductible. Monetary donations can be made online at [santiamcanyonwildfirerelieffund.org](http://santiamcanyonwildfirerelieffund.org). In-kind donations of goods and services are also needed. For information, visit [santiamcanyonwildfirerelieffund.org](http://santiamcanyonwildfirerelieffund.org).

The distribution of funds is overseen by a collaborative group of community members already vested in the SIT network. Resources are directed where there is the greatest need and 100% of contributions will be distributed to Santiam Canyon residents until the fund is exhausted.

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