



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

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SUCCESSFUL WILDFIRE RECOVERY PROJECT WRAPS UP

Mental Health Services Provided to Hundreds of Wildfire Victims Over One-Year Period

County residents devastated by the October 2003 wildfires were assisted in their personal recovery by the Wildfire Recovery Project, which ends services nearly a year later, on Nov. 24.

The project reached out to hundreds of residents, especially traditionally under-served populations like children and seniors, and participated in community fairs and events designed to heal the 16 communities affected by the fires.

“Mental health services are sometimes the last thing people think of after a tragedy of this size,” said Dianne Jacob, Chairwoman, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. “But people who lost homes, loved ones, beloved pets and priceless mementos suffered lingering emotional effects, and we are pleased that we could provide relief for them.”

The project, staffed by 26 outreach workers, also offered support groups, as well as individual crisis counseling and referral. Cooperative relationships also were established among community agencies and faith organizations. Staff worked collaboratively with fire recovery groups including the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, Catholic Charities and Jewish Family Services to ensure that needs of survivors were met.

Wildfire Recovery Project staff also were recognized by the San Diego County Fair for their educational exhibit that highlighted the impact of the firestorm on communities.

As the project winds down, it leaves affected communities with ongoing resources and support systems. Twenty-two community leaders have been trained to continue the remaining work of conflict resolution and disaster recovery. Training and materials also will be provided to schools to help school staffers identify children who need additional services.

The project, administered by the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency’s Mental Health Services, was run by two contractors, Community Research Foundation and New Alternatives, Inc., through a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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