

93108Fund Distributes Cash to Montecito Hourly Workers

For immediate release

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Photo opportunity: distributions to workers are being made at local establishments according to social distancing rules. Please call for details.

Montecito – A non-profit that was started after the 2018 debris flow is getting much-needed cash into the hands of desperate hourly workers in Montecito quickly and efficiently, so that workers who have lost their jobs can pay for basic necessities like food and medicine.

The 93108Fund has given away \$40,000 to 400 hourly workers who have either lost their jobs, been furloughed, or had their hours cut significantly. For now, each hourly worker receives \$100 cash, but organizers plan to give away greater amounts as they raise more money.

“We are trying to make the process as speedy and efficient as possible,” said Montecito resident Ron Blitzer, who started the 93108Fund after the debris flow in January 2018, and re-started it late last month after the COVID-19 stay at home orders closed many businesses in the Upper and Lower Villages of Montecito.

Blitzer noted that the online application is very simple and that the first round of cash payments were in the hands of workers within 4 days of the project starting. “It’s critical that we get money into these workers hands fast,” he said. “But to do that, we need to raise more money as soon as possible.”

The 93108Fund hopes to raise \$600,000 in the coming days and weeks so that the approximately 1,200 hourly workers in Montecito who have lost their jobs can receive up to \$500 each. One hundred percent of the funds raised will go directly to the workers. So far, a little over \$75,000 has been raised.

If you are interested in making a donation to the fund, checks can be sent to: 93108Fund, c/o American Riviera Bank, 525 San Ysidro Road, Montecito, CA, 93108. The 93108Fund.org website also has a link to a PayPal site for donations. All donations are tax-deductible.

Already, two community partners have stepped forward with matching grants: the Kirby Jones Foundation, with a \$15,000 matching grant; and the Montecito Firefighters’ Charitable Foundation, with a \$5,000 cash grant and a \$10,000 matching grant.

“Workers are very stressed and anxious right now because they can’t work, and no one has gotten an unemployment check yet from the government. These workers don’t know how they are going to feed their families or pay their rent,” said Alison Hardey, owner of Jeannine’s who is also a volunteer for the non-profit.

Workers who would like to receive a cash grant should go to 93108Fund.org to apply. Volunteers from the 93108Fund then call the employers to verify the worker was employed before the stay at home order closed down restaurants, shops and offices. Once more donations are received, more cash grants will be made to workers in the form of a debit card. To qualify, workers must have been employed in the 93108 zip code area.

One thing is clear: the need is great. Applicants are asked to submit a short sentence as to why they need the grant, and the answers are heartbreaking. “I am completely out of work and haven’t heard anything from unemployment yet. I am a single mom...I am fearful for the future,” said one applicant. “My wife and I are expecting our first child. This has been a very stressful time because we don’t know how long this is going to last,” said another applicant. A common theme among the workers is that they have tried to find work elsewhere, but they have had no luck.

“These hourly workers – whether they be waiters, dishwashers, office workers or retail clerks -- provide important services to our community during normal times, and we want them to know that we appreciate and support them during this crisis,” said Blitzer.

After the debris flow in Montecito in 2018, Blitzer quickly established the 93108Fund and within a month starting distributing up to \$250 in cash to hourly wage earners. In total, the Fund delivered checks to over 950 hourly wage earners in need. When the stay at home order was issued last month and restaurants, shops and offices in Montecito were ordered to close, Blitzer and his volunteers decided it was time to get back to work.

“Due to the emergence of Covid-19 and the anticipated needs of our community’s hourly workers, we decided to reignite our fundraising and marketing efforts to assist, once again, the at-risk workers in Montecito,” said Blitzer, who has lived in Montecito nearly 20 years.

The official sponsor of the 93108Fund is Win.Win.Give, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Volunteers of the 93108Fund include: Ron Blitzer, Gregg Bigger, Gregg Wilson, Kristen Teufel, Alison Hardey, Nicole Herlihy, Laura Wyatt, Michele Cuttler, Julia Rodgers and Tricia Raphaelian.