Dear City Council members and colleagues,

It's been five weeks since the massive fire at the Twin Pines Manor Apartments in Sunnyvale. Thank you all for the amazing efforts across all sectors to help the families. We are so grateful for the outpouring of support to assist the families who were displaced.

After the Cadre Network meeting on Tuesday, April 19th, Sunnyvale Community Services concentrated on case management to help all the families. It was a busy time, and it was a challenge just to determine how many of the units had been occupied and how many people and families were residing at the apartment complex at the time of the fire. We determined that 71 of the units (out of a total of 81) were occupied on April 15th. One was the managers’ unit, and one family/unit chose not to work with us. We have been case managing the remaining 69 families (169 individuals).

We are thankful that as of today, 56 of the families have been safely housed. Eight of the 56 families are in transitional housing and we are working with them to find permanent housing. There are 13 families remaining who will need more supportive services to find and maintain housing.

These numbers are well ahead of our forecasts by 4-6 weeks thanks to the outpouring of support.

Landlords have stepped up to offer housing at reasonable rates, and donors have contributed to support hotel stays, move-in costs, furniture, and other necessities. The list of supporters includes local businesses, faith communities, countless individuals, non-profit partners, the Red Cross, and both County and City government.

We feel that the early intervention by the City of Sunnyvale to move most of the families into motels by day three was the single biggest factor in helping the families to rapidly re-house. The support from Sunnyvale’s Department of Public Safety did not stop after the fire rescue – they stayed involved the entire weekend to help families. VTA supplied a bus to transport the families during the first three days. The City of Sunnyvale’s staff worked all weekend to help the families, and faith communities donated meals.

The Monday after the fire, Sunnyvale Community Services took over as the case management agency working with the families. They were joined by senior staff of Downtown Streets Team (DST), and Greg Pensinger from DST remained on the project team full time. Our partners at West Valley Community Services and Abode Services offered transitional housing units. Our colleagues at CSA Mountain View are case managing several of the most vulnerable seniors. HomeFirst has helped with transportation and Salvation Army has offered vouchers for families to shop in their stores. The Law Foundation of Silicon Valley and Project Sentinel offered information on tenant rights. Funding from The City of Sunnyvale, Santa Clara County, The Housing Trust, Jay Paul Developers, Google, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, LinkedIn, Wells Fargo Bank, Level 10 Construction, Specialty Solid Waste & Recycling, as well as countless faith communities, service clubs and individual donors have all added up to fund the most critical needs for the families displaced by the fire.

Every staff person and every resource at Sunnyvale Community Services has been utilized to help the fire victims. At the same time, we have continued to serve other low-income families and seniors in need of financial aid and food and referrals. The Monday after the fire, 900 families came for our weekly produce program, and our doors stayed open for all in need. We assist nearly 7,000 individuals each year.

While we continue to support all of the fire victim families, we are now concentrating on refilling and replenishing our resources as an emergency assistance agency. Since 1970, Sunnyvale Community Services have worked to prevent homelessness and hunger in our community. The unprecedented emergency at Twin Pines Manor required extraordinary effort on the part of our agency, our partners, and the community. We are grateful for the long-time support of so many donors and volunteers who have contributed over the years to help us always be prepared to help our neighbors. We will work with partners to learn from this experience and apply those insights to our everyday work assisting low-income families and seniors, and to be prepared for future emergencies.

The Cadre Network Operations for the Twin Pines Manor fire incident has been officially “deactivated.” http://www.cadresv.org/

Please let me know if you have any questions. I’ve attached the formal report being sent to the County of Santa Clara, along with a letter from the Red Cross and a flyer on how we are moving forward.

Best Regards,

Marie Bernard
Executive Director
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Preventing homelessness and hunger in Sunnyvale since 1970