

# DAILY MINER

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## After the Camp Fire



A group of volunteers from Mohave County, with support from individuals and organizations throughout the area, took canned food, clothes, blankets, tools and more to those affected by Northern California's Camp Fire. (Courtesy)

*'No giving up or turning back' for local volunteers assisting  
Camp Fire victims*

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**“I**n less than 60 seconds, she took her birds and her pets and put them in her bathroom and said goodbye. And then ran for her life.”

Even while sitting in the comfort of one's own home watching the news, the devastation to homes, businesses and the lives of those affected by the northern California Camp Fire evokes an emotional reaction and inspires a calling to lend a hand to those in need.

For a group of Mohave County volunteers, including Kim Casey, who above describes an interaction with a Camp Fire victim, the urge to provide assistance to those short on food, clothing, and even without homes proved too great to just sit back and watch relief efforts unfold on the TV and in the newspaper.

“I looked at the pictures from Paradise,” said Pat Farrell, president of the Jerry Ambrose

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USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement & Investigations teams were deployed for support after the Camp Fire swept through nearby communities including Paradise, Magalia and Concow in Northern California. (Forest Service photo by Tanner Hembree)

# Volunteer

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Veterans Council. "I've seen some war-torn areas in my time, but I have never seen anything like that."

According to [www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov), from the time reports of the incident began Nov. 8 to the last update Dec. 14, nearly 14,000 residences, 528 commercial buildings and 4,293 other buildings were destroyed by the fire that burned 153,336 acres. More than 80 people lost their lives.

Farrell said he made some calls and discovered that 26 Vietnam veterans had lost their homes in the fire with another 12-25 still missing. He said that is "devastating to the veteran community," and that before he could even get the words out to ask volunteers if they would be interested in making a trip to the affected area, he received the responses for which he was hoping.

Bob Barnett, Dan Martell, Kim Casey and Kevin Burns helped to spearhead the effort by taking supplies on a 1,592-mile roundtrip from Kingman to Magalia, California, the closest relief volunteers could get to Paradise.

"We know every time that we're helping a veteran, we're freeing up resources for the civilian population, so it's a win-win on that aspect," Martell said. "It's not that we're just looking out for the veterans, we know that by targeting our crew it assists everybody."

The devastation "became real" for Casey

and the other volunteers when they arrived at a park that was about 20 minutes from the burn area to unload supplies.

"The entire park was just a sea of tents," Martell said, with those temporary dwellings populating the entire area from curb to curb.

Casey heard an emotional first-hand account from one woman who had but 60 seconds to evacuate her home.

"When they came to her door, she had less than 60 seconds to get out of her house," Casey said. "In less than 60 seconds, she took her birds and her pets and put them in her bathroom and said goodbye. And then ran for her life."

Rather than unloading the supplies they brought, which included canned food items, clothing, some 90 blankets, tools and more, at the first staging area in Chico, volunteers opted to drive an extra hour and a half to deliver those supplies directly to Magalia in one trip. That entailed driving the U-Haul truck uphill on a snowy, dirt road, which didn't deter volunteers in the slightest.

"When it comes to rescuing somebody, it's on," Martell said. "There is no giving up or turning back."

Upon arrival in Magalia, Casey said there was overwhelming support from the community, which was "extremely positive," Martell added.

"It was beautiful, the neighbors just showed up and just jumped right in and started helping," Casey said. "It's like everybody knows everybody else up there. It was just a beautiful community to see, they all worked together."

The community of Mohave County also came together in providing assistance. Volunteers who made the trip received assistance from numerous individuals and organizations such as Nani Chrimes and the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Anderson Auto Group, Kokopelli's Storage/U-Haul, Vietnam Veterans of America Mohave County Chapter 975, Annie's Art Attic, Veteran's Thrift of Lake Havasu City and the JAVC.

Would those volunteers make another trip?

"I'd do it tomorrow, I'd do it today," Barnett said; "I would go in a heartbeat," Casey said; "When it comes to rescuing, I'm always on board," Martell added.

For Casey, the trip was deeply moving.

"You see things on the news and you react, 'Oh,

that's horrible,' but once you experience the people who are there, you realize there are billions, I say billions, of very good people in this world," she said. "And they all came together, everybody was a big team, to make this work."

However, what the area needs now are monetary donations to help rebuild lives. For information on how and where to donate, contact Farrell at the Jerry Ambrose Veterans Council at 928-716-3001.

"One truck didn't make a difference out there," Farrell said, speaking to the magnitude of what is needed. "The important part was to show support for them and show that help was coming and on the way, and that people care about you."