

WITH FIRES DEVASTATING WINE COUNTRY, HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

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With fires sweeping across Northern California and its famous wine regions, we are in the throes of yet another disaster, the scope of which we won't know for perhaps weeks. As I write this, at least 29 people have died in Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Yuba counties. That number is expected to grow as several hundred more have been reported missing. Aided by fast-moving and shifting winds magnifying the chaos, the 22 fires have consumed about 4,000 homes, businesses and other structures, forcing the evacuation of more than 20,000 residents. Almost 200,000 acres have been charred, altogether an area larger than the city of Chicago. Entire neighborhoods in Santa Rosa, the county seat of Sonoma County, are ashes.



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Kimberly Noelle Charles, of Charles Communications, a marketing and development company, lives in San Francisco. Her firm has represented, among other types of businesses, wineries for 30 years. She was coming home Sunday night around midnight from a Depeche Mode concert in San Jose when she learned of the fire. "I smelled smoke and saw ashes blowing in front of my car," she told me Wednesday. "I thought at first that it was leaves that had become detached. But I checked my social feeds. "I just stayed up through the night to monitor it. I emailed clients at 1 in the morning to be assured of their safety," Charles continued, "and most got back to me before 5 a.m."

Charles's agency established a GoFundMe campaign, to raise \$50,000 to help those in need and is networking with others to get help to them.



Susan Kostrzewa, executive editor of Wine Enthusiast magazine, helped publicized the campaign, Charles said, and put her in contact with Costco. Annette Alvarez-Peters, who heads Costco's alcohol beverage division, donated \$2,000 worth of food, Charles said. Target discounted goods that people need, like sleeping bags, cots, water, baby clothes and diapers. Charles's boyfriend is a musician who owns a moving company, Killian's Fine Furniture Delivery. His crew and one of its trucks delivered its first load of goods to the Mentor Me at the Cavanagh Recreation Center in Petaluma, which she said was sheltering 500 evacuees. So far, she's raised \$18,000 "in goods and cash," she told me. "Thanksgiving is coming and many people who have lost homes will need groceries and other goods."

Charles and Joshua Greene, editor and publisher of Wine & Spirits magazine, put together a silent auction of wines at the magazine's Top 100 gala in San Francisco Tuesday night to benefit victims of the fires.

"Overall, we received commitments for \$4,100 in donations to fire disaster relief. We will be following up with winning bidders and shepherding their donation commitments to relief groups," Greene wrote me in an email. Some of the wines were donated by JJ Buckley Fine Wines, an online store in Oakland, and from Charles's clients Gallica, Crocker & Starr, Parallel, Emeritus, and former client, Arista.

Charles also told me that Airbnb was seeking homes to house evacuees and connecting evacuees with free lodging through October 31.