

Helping PERF ‘take care of our own’



Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

Bruce Springsteen sings it best: “We take care of our own.”

As letter carriers—and in our lives in general—we’ve seen a lot. But when I see reports on the news about wild fires, hurricanes or flooding, my mind quickly goes to, “I hope no one was hurt,” and then, “I wonder how the carriers there are doing.” Like you, I instinctively want to help them. But how?

Up until 1990, help from any postal entity for employees and their families suffering the effects of horrible events—such as earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes and house fires—tended to be unorganized, disparate or nonexistent.

But in 1990, in response to the previous fall’s tragedies of Hurricane Hugo and the major earthquake that hit the San Francisco region, postal craft unions and management associations came together to create a permanent process to assist postal employees who become victims of major natural disasters. The all-postal collaboration resulted in the Postal Employees’ Relief Fund (PERF), the postal-operated charity fund solely benefitting postal employees who are displaced from their homes for an extended period of time because of natural disasters.

“We are one postal family, especially when the chips are down and some of us fall on hard times.”

PERF is available to help all active and retired postal employees whose homes were destroyed or left uninhabitable as a result of a major natural disaster or house fire that displaces employees and their families for extended periods. The fund provides small relief grants (tax-free money that does not have to be repaid) to help qualifying victims with re-establishing residences or to help replenish basic necessities in the aftermath of a devastating loss.

A 501(c)(3) charitable organization, PERF is operated by all of the management groups and union organizations of the U.S. Postal Service to provide grants only to postal employees. Since its inception, the fund has provided thousands of grants totaling millions of dollars to active and retired postal employees affected by natural disasters and house fires.

The fund is managed by a group of grantors that includes the postmaster general and the presidents of each of the participating unions and management associations: NALC, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Postal

Mail Handlers Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association, the National Association of Postal Supervisors, and the United Postmasters and Managers of America. Each of the grantors selects an individual to represent their organization on the fund’s executive committee, which handles the day-to-day operations of the fund.

PERF exists only because of contributions made by those who care. There is no unlimited source of money magically sitting in an account from which checks are drawn. The fund is financed 100 percent by charitable donations, the vast majority of which come from postal and other federal employees’ payroll deductions during the annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

The fund also receives group and individual donations by check and money order sent directly to it, as well as by credit card via PERF’s website at postalrelief.com.

Something new for the 2018 CFC is that retired postal employees will be able to contribute to PERF through automatic deductions from their postal annuities. Information on how retirees can sign up for this method will be coming soon from the Office of Personnel Management, and when it’s available, information will be posted at postalrelief.com and on nalc.org under Community Service.

In 2016, 72 letter carriers received PERF grants totaling more than \$175,000. I know from reading the thank-you letters sent by PERF grant recipients that the help from fellow postal employees was gratefully and humbly accepted. Most wrote that they were unaware of PERF until they received help from it.

Please take a good look at all of the opportunities to give to the CFC during its open season, Oct. 2 through Jan. 12. Hard-copy materials about CFC and sign-up forms will be available from your USPS district’s human resources manager and at cfcharities.opm.gov.

Ultimately, we are all postal employees, craft and management alike. We don’t all agree on everything—in fact, at times, we openly disagree. But, we are one *postal* family, especially when the chips are down and some of us fall on hard times. We need everyone’s help so that PERF can help when it needs to—as it has for more than 27 years.

And, yes—we *do* take care of our own. So this CFC open season, please consider donating to PERF—CFC #10268—and help us take care of our own.

