

Recycling From the Heart, For HEART

A few years ago, Casa de Mañana Housekeeping Supervisor Juan Martinez and his team noticed an abundance of aluminum cans and plastic bottles filling up trash cans around the community, mostly from staff who would purchase drinks from vending machines in employee break areas. At the same time, his department was asked by management to come up with an innovative idea to better meet residents' or employees' needs.



“We thought it would be so simple to collect the aluminum cans and bottles and start a recycling program within our department,” Juan said. “I immediately thought of the HEART Fund.”

In 2014, Front Porch established the HEART (Helping Employees At Risk Today) Fund, a special emergency fund administered through the Front Porch Communities Foundation.

Casa Club President Kathy Cormier asked if the residents association could help get the word out about the employee assistance fund Juan's team was supporting. Kathy's idea was simple... place recycling bins throughout the community adorned with painted hearts on their sides. “Residents stepped up for a good cause,” Kathy said. “The Casa Club was happy to play a small part in the HEART Fund's success here at Casa.”

Kathy and Juan estimate that in 2020, the recycling project earned about \$1,400.

Lisa Coats' home burned to the ground in the 2017 Northern California firestorms, and colleagues, residents and friends of the Foundation sprang into action. Lisa, an accounting assistant at Spring Lake Village in Santa Rosa, and a dozen other team members who lost their homes in the fires were helped by the Foundation's Employee Emergency Fund.

“The outpouring of support was amazing,” Lisa said. “We were fortunate to have good insurance for temporary housing but we soon learned that we were severely underinsured for the replacement of the home itself, as were a lot of the survivors. The generosity of staff and residents was amazing.”

The Foundation's Employee Emergency Fund in Northern California is similar to the HEART Fund in Southern California, providing support to staff during times of need. Residents and staff throughout the Front Porch communities have stepped up to provide gifts to the Foundation employee

emergency funds in response to the wildfires that have sprung up throughout the state in recent years.

As Lisa and her family rebuilt their house, support from the emergency fund helped them make it a home. "We were sure to furnish our home with things we were accustomed to," Lisa notes. "It really made a difference that we could put some of those things back into place once we were home."

The support Lisa and her family received touched her heart. "When I think about how amazingly generous folks were, I still get teary," she said. "Our lives would be so much more stressful if not for the help."