

Moraga Volunteers Shift into Overdrive to Help Fire Victims

By Lou Fancher, Correspondent for the Bay Area News Group

Never underestimate the power of one person with an idea to call out the best in humanity.

Safe herself, but reacting to the devastating fires sweeping through Sonoma and Napa counties, 22-year-old Brooke Penfold, a global studies and Spanish major at Sonoma State, thought, “I need to do something to help.”

The 2013 graduate of Campolindo High School contacted her father, Bart Penfold, who lives in her hometown of Moraga.

“I said maybe we’d have a little donation drive, collect stuff in my parent’s garage. I’d maybe have to fold down the backseat of my little Rav4 to drive it back up here,” Penfold says.

Instead, with a post at the Moraga Country Club Facebook page and messages on other social media and through small-town word of mouth, Penfold’s “little idea” filled two 50-foot tractor-trailers.

“It took on a dimension that’s hard to describe,” says her father. “This started Monday, after the firestorm started and by Monday night, my garage and entire driveway was full. I called Brooke and said we’d obviously tapped a nerve. Lamorinda had lit up.”

The operation went into full swing as Penfold realized she’d have to rethink her initial plan to provide supplies for families she knows through her work with Santa Rosa-based mobile classroom Language Truck.

Penfold leads GED courses at Sonoma County libraries and after-school Spanish classes at Hidden Valley Satellite, one of two schools destroyed in the fires.

Faced with a growing mountain of backpacks, school materials, clothing for all ages, first aid kits, toiletries, water supplies, canned food, toys and much-needed face masks, Penfold recalled trucks used by the Campolindo football team in 2012, the year the team traveled to Southern California for the state championship.

“I remembered they had “**Macy Movers**” painted on the side. I thought they were owned by coach (Kevin) Macy,” she says.

An email sent to Macy was forwarded to his brother, **Mark Macy**, the company’s actual owner.

“He was all in, right from the start,” says Penfold. “He offered one truck, then another when that one filled up. He drove a truck up, paid for gas, donated 25 dollies to move supplies. He’s been fantastic.

Mark Macy says seeing families, kids and especially members of the Campo JV football team step up to load the truck without complaining was huge. In Sonoma, he drove the truck to the distribution site.

“People’s energy up there was dazed, but positive. You know, we were right downtown in a 50-foot truck. Typically, people would be honking at you if you did that. Not this time. They knew what people were going through.”

Penfold says one week after the fires began that people in Sonoma County are still in survival mode. But to Moraga, the words she most wants to spread are “thank you,” along with apologies for the phrase’s inadequacy.

“That’s what you say when someone hands you a receipt in a store, but I’ve never been prouder to be from this community. It’s not about me. I just sent out the messages. It’s the town that rose to the occasion.”

Editor’s Note: **Mark Macy** told CMSA, “The volume of donations was so overwhelming that the original drop-off site couldn’t handle it all. So my wife, **Kirstin**, who was my assistant, called **Bob Fraser’s** wife, **Cris**, who graciously let us leave our trailer at **Redwood Moving & Storage** for the week.” He added, “**Paul Fraser of Redwood Moving and Storage** assisted the volunteers with unloading the remaining items.”