Healing our community
one meal at a time

2018 ANNUAL REPORT
A 501C3 NON-PROFILE

SONOMA FAMILY MEAL
HEALING OUR COMMUNITY
ONE MEAL AT A TIME
Healing our community through food
Sonoma Family Meal was born at local food writer Heather Irwin’s kitchen table on Oct. 14 -- in the midst of the Northern California firestorms of 2017 with the single idea of providing nourishing, chef-made meals for families during and after the devastating wildfires.

Over a period of nearly five weeks, SFM was able to quickly connect the Bay Area food community, take in large amounts of donated food, prepare it safely and quickly, utilize food surpluses and avoid waste by creating an efficient program that served between 2,000 and 3,000 portions of restaurant-quality food for families of 4-6, served to-go for anyone in need of a meal.

**IN JUST OVER A MONTH, THE VOLUNTEER-BASED ORGANIZATION SERVED MORE THAN 80,000 MEALS TO SONOMA COUNTY.**

SFM offers a community-driven model of food assistance that activates our connections in the local food community to assist families experiencing a transitional need for prepared meal assistance. We use high-quality ingredients -- often organic and GMO-free -- prepared in a professional manner by chefs.

**BUT WE MADE A PERSONAL PROMISE TO FIRE VICTIMS: TO BE HERE FOR THEM AS LONG AS THERE WAS A NEED.**

**OUR ONGOING MISSION**

Mobilizing the local food community to serve families experiencing a transitional need for prepared meal assistance.
OUR WORK CONTINUES
Because rebuilding will take years.

Though the fires are out, the trauma continues for these families. They are only beginning to cope with the rebuilding process.

There is a secondary housing crisis, with families finding themselves unable to find a permanent place to live.

23% say they have no idea how long they will be able to stay in their current dwellings.

$317,000 is the average out-of-pocket cost for rebuilding (after insurance payouts).

66% are in temporary housing one year after the fires.

What our families say about Family Meal

Meals are a great emotional assistance: 97%
Meals have had a significant impact: 85%
Meals have been important to my recovery: 85%
I’ve come to count on meals from SFM: 80%
Highly beneficial financially: 73%
**1200 MEALS PER WEEK TO 80 FAMILIES WHO LOST HOMES**

“The ongoing hardships of the fire are far from over for families who lost homes.”
--SFM GUEST BLAKE G.

Nearly 125,000 meals served since October 2017 with dignity, love and compassion.

The ongoing need is unquestionable. With thousands of families without adequate housing, and facing an uphill battle to even stay in the area, providing nourishing meals is the least we can do for our friends and neighbors.

A pilot program started in January 2018 and has grown to 1,200 meals per week.

“We have lived in Santa Rosa for 45 years. After the fires, we lived in a hotel for the first week, at a friend's house for 4 months and then in a 1 year lease rental in Windsor, taking us away from family and friends.

SFM and the volunteers and staff have been an anchor to the kindness and outreach from our community.”

- SFM Guests AL and Susan W.

“SFM has helped us emotionally, physically and financially. Some weeks it has been the only thing to look forward to.

I believe it will take many years to recover financially and emotionally.”
**KEY PROJECTS**

1. **Our Petaluma Kitchen and Franchetti’s Woodfire Kitchen**

   During the fires, no central disaster kitchen was available to us, so we used restaurants. In less than a month, we moved 5 times, creating extreme stress on our team. In January, we moved into a large commercial kitchen in Petaluma owned by Cornerstone Properties. Chef John Franchetti also allowed us the ongoing use of his restaurant for packing and distribution.

2. **Non-Profit Status & Fundraising**

   SFM was granted 501c3 status in early January, less than four weeks after applying. We incorporated our company and became a full-fledged non-profit with a board of directors.

   Our next mission was fundraising. We have been fortunate to have received generous donations of money, equipment and food. We continue to seek ongoing funding.

3. **Education and Outreach**

   SFM is a part of the ongoing Rebuilding Our Community (ROC) Sonoma organization working toward the longterm recovery of our county. We have also participated in numerous events, provided cooking demonstrations, worked with gleaning organizations, and have received numerous awards.
With the loss of 5,800 households, many local farmers and producers are facing dire economic circumstances. During the fires we were the beneficiaries of a CAFF grant that paid farmers for their produce -- benefitting them and our guests.

We continue to be dedicated to using local food and paying local producers.

SFM’s zero-waste goals take advantage of food donations from Guy’s Grocery Games, the Redwood Empire Food Bank and restaurants that have surpluses. Any extra food is donated to local shelters.

CORPORATE & CLUB SPONSORS
Santa Rosa Lion’s Club
Tipping Point
Jackson Family Wines
Squires Cigars
Cornerstone Properties
Lagunitas Brewing
Cherry Kola Farms
Guy’s Grocery Games
Hansel Ford
Redwood Credit Union
Instant Pot
Santa Rosa Junior College

RESTAURANTS
Stark Reality Restaurants
Single Thread Restaurant & Farm
Franchetti’s Woodfire Kitchen
Petaluma
McNear’s
Seared
Preferred Sonoma Caterers
Perch & Plow
Gerard’s Paella
Clover Stornetta
Franco American Bread
Wildflour Bakery
Jackson’s Bar & Oven
Cookie Take a Bite
Moustache Bakery
Valette
Victorian Farmstead Meats
Two Tread Brewing

FARMERS & PRODUCERS
FEED Sonoma
CAFF
Preston Vineyards
Petaluma Poultry
Redwood Empire Food Bank
La Tortilla Factory
Farm to Pantry

KEY DONORS

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The Sonoma Family Meal program has provided "normalcy", in a situation where there is no normalcy.

-Melissa

SFM has been so extremely helpful to me as a single parent! Not having to worry as much about having a meal for my kid, or myself, has been one less thing to stress about! I'm still dealing with depression, anxiety, and PTSD from the event, and knowing that I don't have to cook every night is one less thing off my full plate!

-Tiffany

We are a big family and dragging our family from renting place to place have not been easy but not having to think about cooking dinner for at least couple of times a week is awesome. You have been a God sent for my family and I hope it will be like this at least for a while.

It is still not easy for us but having these meals means a lot. God Bless you for this and for having the idea of helping us, the ones that lost everything.

-Anna

After the fires and before SFM I was eating mostly at fast food restaurants. With SFM I am eating healthier and the food tastes soooo good. Also it is hard to cook in the RV. When I have cooked hamburgers it sets off the smoke alarm no matter how many windows I have open.

-Terri

None of the fire survivors we know feel they are better off, no matter if rebuilding, purchasing, or moving away. Having organizations like SFM really helps ground us and makes us feel not forgotten. Recovering from trauma is a daunting task and the experts say it takes two years or longer -- it certainly seems that way to us -- without your help, we don't know what we would do.

-Al and Susan Wilcox

We have very limited abilities to cook meals. SFM has helped us to have healthy chef prepared meals on a regular basis. The staff is also very warm and caring. I look forward to the day I can give back.

-Brad

We have a 6 month old boy -- first time parents -- and having to navigate insurance, a construction loan, and the rebuild process on top of having our first born has been incredibly overwhelming.

As a result of the fire and being underinsured, once we move into our rebuilt home, our new loan payment from the construction to permanent loan will be $1000 more per month than our original house payment before the fires.

Plus, we had to put all our savings towards the build so we need all the financial help we can get. Sonoma Family Meal gives us both financial and immediate practical help at the same time!

- Heather
Sonoma Family Meal Board of Directors

Heather Irwin, Founder/CEO
Heather Irwin is the dining editor for Sonoma Magazine and the Press Democrat and the founder of BiteClub. With more than 12 years of experience covering local restaurants, chefs and food purveyors, she was uniquely qualified to lead a local effort to feed fire victims during the 2017 wildfires in Sonoma County. She was honored by the Community Child Care Council for SFM’s work during the fires.

Taylor Eason, Treasurer
Taylor is a marketing MBA and former European-trained chef with a passion for food and wine plus a penchant for digital marketing. She has spent the last six years honing her marketing skills at wineries in Napa and Sonoma and, prior to that, 14 years in media marketing, ranging from building and launching websites to multi-tiered email marketing. As a side gig, she also traveled the world as an internationally syndicated wine columnist, as well as achieved her Certified Specialist of Wine certification. In 2017, she founded her own digital marketing agency, Cork & Fork Digital Media, which services the food and beverage industries with innovative branding and sales techniques.

Landon McPherson, Secretary
Landon was born and raised in Sonoma County and has found that his passion for food, wine and all things Wine Country lifestyle was the perfect collection of passions that would soon drive the launch of Harvest Card (a luxury experienced-based wine country membership). Getting his start in corporate/social hospitality, Landon always focused on building relationships and promoting the local artisans. He continued building relationships in his community by working in capacities of marketing, public relations and sales. Landon has been an active supporter of Sonoma Family Meal since its inception and could not be more proud to collaborate with such a great organization in serving those who have been affected by the fires in Sonoma County.

Sonoma Family Meal is a 501c3 tax-exempt non-profit. Our status was granted by the IRS in a record three weeks due to our disaster status.
Born in the darkest hours of the October 2017 fires, food writer Heather Irwin rallied top chefs from the Bay Area to donate prepared meals to families who had lost homes, were without power for days, or who had been displaced by the fires.

With her own extended family displaced, Heather quickly realized that it was a challenge to put together a meal for 12 people in a strange location. As chefs called on her to ask how they could help, she realized that putting the two together might just be a godsend to fire victims. Chef-prepared meals, served to-go for 4 to 6 people, ready-to-eat and most importantly, safely made.

Using social media as a communication platform to recruit volunteers, chefs, producers and monetary donations, SFM served nearly 1,500 people out of a small restaurant in Santa Rosa on its first day.

Working with Chef Sondra Bernstein, Traci des Jardins and the chefs of SF Fights Fire, Miriam Donaldson of Wishbone, Thomas Schmidt of John Ash & Co, and dozens of Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, Napa and Petaluma chefs, the meals continued. By our third day of operation SFM was cooking hundreds of pounds of donated meat and produce and serving thousands.

Unlike other agencies, we asked for no proof of need, but stepped as a unique alternative to typical relief programs—fresh meals to-go. All of our guests were greeted warmly, and handed complete prepared dinners to take to their homes, hotels or friends homes to eat around the family table. Because we were able to move nimbly and rally existing connections in the disaster, SFM became a beacon of hope and a food resource that hundreds of families came to depend on.
WHAT’S NEXT

1. SFM is looking for a longterm location of our own. We will need a large commercial kitchen with the ability to serve food. Our ideal location is Santa Rosa.

2. SFM will work with multi-generational women to create a cooking and training program, along with an incubator kitchen for women seeking to create cottage businesses to support their families.

3. SFM will be working with ROC Sonoma to take on additional fire survivor families who have been vetted by social services and are in need of longterm food assistance after losing jobs, income and homes.

4. As fire victims sunset, we plan to transition SFM to serve families in the community who are experiencing a temporary need for prepared food, including women’s shelters and individual families taking care of each other.

5. We are in need of additional board members, advisors and grant-writers who can further our mission.

6. We also are always in need of volunteers to help us with cooking, packing and distributing.

Fundraising is a key issue for 2018-2019 to allow us to pay 4 part-time staff members, including an outreach coordinator, chef, administrative coordinator and pantry master.

We also need to raise significant funds for our food costs.

Donations can be made at sonomafamilymeal.org/donate

Sonoma Family Meal is eternally grateful to all of those who have helped us reach our goals.