

Tubbs Wildfire survivor helping Maui victims with insurance claims

ABC 7 News

A Santa Rosa woman is in Maui helping survivors of the wildfires rebuild their lives and futures. As a survivor of the North Bay Wildfires herself, the mission is a labor of love.

"I tend to see the challenges. I tend to see the heartache," said Annie Barbour.

Annie Barbour is on the ground in Maui helping wildfire survivors move forward with their insurance claims, which can be overwhelming.

"The people are traumatized. They have 'fire brain' as I call it. Their brain is fuzzy. They can only navigate so much, and I see a lot of fear," Barbour said.

That fear is something Barbour knows about all too well.

"It's an immediate bond. They know I understand," she said.

Barbour lost her family's home in Santa Rosa's Coffey Park during the 2017 Tubbs Fire, which burned thousands of homes and killed two dozen people.

"That's something that doesn't go away. It's a grief you have navigate," she said.

Barbour works for United Policyholders, a San Francisco-based nonprofit helping homeowners get the insurance resources they need. Besides assisting with paperwork and overcoming red tape, she's also there to listen.

"My heart's with them. I relate to them, and I try to give them the best advice I can," Barbour said.

“This is just crazy. I can’t even, it’s just too much. I’ve lost friends, been here 48 years. I’ve never seen anything like this in my entire life,” said Maui wildfire survivor Nancy Garnett.

“I’m not going to get that number right — 36 or 38 times a survivor has to tell their story before they can begin to heal,” Barbour said.

Barbour has also helped survivors from the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, one of the most destructive in California History.

Her home in Santa Rosa has been rebuilt after the fire. She hopes to bring the same closure to the people of Maui.

“There’s challenges in all these communities. We have to figure out how we help them navigate all that,” she said.