

# Torrington rallies for fire victims

*Donation centers set up, fundraisers have been planned*

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*Tasha Laviera and Sarah Toomey, outreach case workers at Community Health and Wellness Center of Greater Torrington stand with some of the clothes and other items donated for the victims of the Woodland Hills Apartments fire on Friday. Toomey said the biggest need is personal care items and gift cards for local stores, including supermarkets and department stores to help the families. Donations are being accepted through Friday. Bruno Matarazzo Jr. Republican-American*

**TORRINGTON** – As the investigation into Friday’s three-alarm fire at Woodland Hills Apartment continues, members of the community are stepping up to help the displaced victims of the fire.

Donation centers have been set up, fundraisers are planned and online fundraising sites are active to help the victims of the fire.

The blaze damaged several units of Building 13 on Friday following a fire that appeared to started on the far end of the eight-unit building.

Residents evacuated and no one was injured in the blaze.

Fire Marshal Edward Bascetta said the cause of the fire remains under investigation. His office is being assisted by local police and state police assigned to the state fire marshal's office.

Word of Friday's fire quickly spread and so too did news of people wanting to help.

Sarah Toomey, a case manager at Community Health and Wellness Center of Greater Torrington, wanted to help after learning of the fire. Toomey and her husband are volunteer firefighters in Winsted and helping out the victims of fires in Winsted is something they do on occasion. She wanted to do the same here. She didn't respond to Friday's fire but her husband did.

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"We just wanted to be helpful in some way," Toomey said. "Because we're a community health center, we're invested in the community. It's something we felt was important."

Clothes were laid out across several tables at the health center. Toomey said she is working with the fire marshal's office and the housing manager at Woodland Hills to distribute the donations.

Donations are being accepted through Friday.

On Monday, AFC Urgent Care owner Thomas Kelley donated 30 Walmart gift cards, each for \$30, to Toomey, one for each of the displaced residents.

Other groups have stepped up, including Joseph's House clothing ministry, King's Closet, offered its clothes to fire victims.

The Latina Woman Association of Northwest Connecticut is also planning a fundraiser, but details were not available on Monday.

A GoFundMe page has been set up for one of the of the three families. A goal of raising \$5,000 has already been surpassed, according to the site [gofundme.com/polanco-fire-fund](https://gofundme.com/polanco-fire-fund).

Toomey said while clothes are important, the personal care items and gift cards are items most in need. She said the community center donated gift cards from a grocery store to the three families whose units suffered the most damage.