

# Rebuild Report 2020

This is the first in a series of Rebuild Reports that we will produce this year to keep you aware of our progress and how your generous investment is being spent.

In the early morning hours of Sunday, February 2, 2020, a fire destroyed the Working Wardrobes headquarters, causing a loss in excess of \$2,500,000 in office equipment, infrastructure, collateral, and donated clothing and accessories. Fire investigators have noted the fire was of "an undetermined origin" and since the owner has not stabilized the building yet, it is unsafe to enter for any further investigation.

After 30 years of helping those in transition gather the tools they need to return to the workforce and rebuild their

lives, we found ourselves in a position where we were forced to rebuild our organization, from its very foundation. We asked for help and were embraced by generous love and support from the Orange County community.

To date, our Rebuild Fund has amassed donations in the amount of \$1,050,000, and, with the guidance of our Leadership Team, Executive Board, and community leaders, we have been strategically allocating that money in accordance with a long-term plan to position the organization for recovery, stability, and growth.



# **Our Phases of Rebuilding**

## **Crisis Management**

2/1/2020 - 3/31/2020

The initial crisis was completely unexpected and taxed our resources significantly. Our immediate need for temporary office space and a donation center was generously donated by Goodwill of Orange County's CEO, Nicole Sudyam. We began to rebuild immediately, served clients and opened our donation center in two days and wardrobing in less than three weeks. We quickly moved to purchase essential office equipment, retail fixtures, to process thousands of pieces of newly donated clothing and mobilized temporary staff and hundreds of volunteers and advisors to provide our workforce development services to clients.

We are proud to report that we were operational and serving our constituents within days of the fire, working out of a temporary headquarters inside the Goodwill Fitness Center. Since the blaze, we have helped well over 100 individuals get the wardrobe, training and confidence they need to return to work.

However, with the advent of the coronavirus outbreak, the world and our organization were dealt another devastating blow.



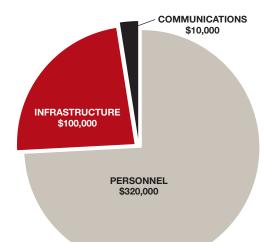
- We pivoted nearly over night to take all client services online, and although we continue to think creatively about ways to serve those who need us now more than ever, the flow of donations that supports our programs has stopped.
- We have elected to move all planned fundraising events to a virtual platform, for everyone's safety.
- We have closed our donation center and all of our retail stores until the COVID-19 crisis passes.

Unfortunately, our survival as an organization necessitated a significant and gut-wrenching layoff of 25 staffers, effective March 31, 2020.

We have chosen to bank the Rebuild Fund contributions until we can open a Career and Donation Center. You, and so many generous donors, gave to help us rebuild Working Wardrobes, and we intend to do just that. Our Leadership Team and Board of Directors are focused on making prudent business decisions to ensure long-term sustainability.

The funds outlined below pertain only to the process of rebuilding Working Wardrobes after the fire and reflect the budgets necessary to continue to stabilize the organization in the wake of this disaster.

## Crisis Management Phase (\$430,000)



#### Definitions

#### Infrastructure:

Office supplies, rolling racks, hangers, retail fixture and marketing collateral for Donation Center.

#### Personnel:

Additional staffing was required to handle work and call volume for clothing drives, corporate donations and volunteer requests as a result of the fire. The community outreach was remarkable.

#### **Communications:**

 Professional services, including Public Relations, required to handle the impact of the fire.

#### **Expenses not represented**

- Emergency services
- Day of fire expenses, including towing: \$994













# Transition

### 4/1/2020 - 6/30/2020

The timeline to provide in-person client services and training, wardrobing and retail shopping services is uncertain, though our goal is to open a new Donation Center in June 2020, and a new Career Center location and reopen our four retail shops in July 2020. We are working diligently to ensure that all safety protocols will be in place and we will look to state and county guidelines for the timing of our openings. There is so much uncertainly built into our lives right now. We want to ensure that we always do what is right and best for our clients, our donors, our volunteers and our staff.

For now, staff members are working remotely, offering our workforce development services on a virtual platform and we are reaching far more clients than ever. We will continue to be innovative in our approach to serving the community and that will include online services, when we reopen our Career Center.

As companies struggle to restore their services and products, and more of our neighbors find themselves without jobs, our new Rebuilding Careers workshops serve a much larger population. This goes to the very core of our mission – helping individuals rebuild their careers with the support of volunteers and corporations. We will use this period to regroup as an organization and focus on how to be more efficient in the future. The opportunity to offer a flexible work schedule to staff will be part of how we rebuild a strong team for the second 30 years for Working Wardrobes. We have seen the positive impact of remote office options, and where feasible, we will continue to find new ways to work and serve more clients, engage our donors and connect with our volunteers.

Once an opening date for our Career Center has been determined, we will send out another Rebuild Report, as this effort will depend greatly on the funds that were donated after the fire.

Although like much of our world, some of our day-to-day operations have been put on hold, the COVID-19 crisis does not eliminate our need for additional funding to continue our rebuilding process when things return to normalcy. We will still need the resources outlined below to move into a new facility, set our team and clients up for successful work together, and invite back the personnel needed to maintain the important operations to fulfill our mission.





Joyce Kersey

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Vallerie Gonzales

**Dinah Sapunarich** 

Dorothy Evans

# Stabilization

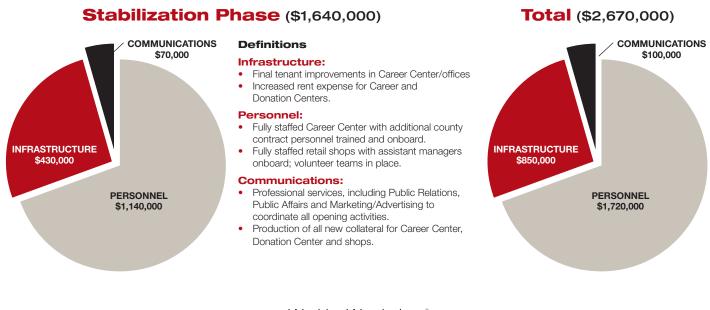
## 7/1/2020 - 12/31/2020

As we look at the long-term projections for the future of Working Wardrobes, we are optimistic about our plans to emerge from this time of turmoil as a stronger organization, with the knowledge that our mission is too important to be put on hold, no matter what obstacles we face.

Armed with the knowledge of how to successfully launch virtual workshops, we see this as a viable expansion strategy. We continue to reach out to transitioning Marines and Sailors at Camp Pendleton and they will be participating in these workshops. This is a powerful new way for us to serve many more active duty service members and ensure their transition to the civilian workforce will be far easier – a softer landing.

You may be as surprised as we were to learn that one of our recent participants was tuning in from Alaska! Virtual expansion at its best.

In 2020, we may very well serve more than 5,000 clients with job training and workforce readiness skills – from a wider geography - as the virtual workshops garner more and more participants. We will use the Rebuild Fund donations to be fully operational in our new Career Center, maintaining necessary staffing levels and funding all important programs and initiatives as we look to fill the needs of more and more clients.



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When we come to the end of 2020 and look back on the year with all of its challenges and wins, it will be as an organization that is smarter, leaner and more operationally agile. We will not soon forget the lessons this year taught us.

- That unexpected challenges can test us but will not break us.
- That the strength of our community and the relationships we have built over the past three decades provide the true power behind our purpose.
- That a good measure of grit and determination surface when truly needed.

More than anything, we have heard from thousands of people who have given to help us rebuild and want us to be even stronger at the end of that process. We are honored by your support and we want you to know how much we value your support. We are in this together, and we're going to celebrate together – soon!