

October 29, 2007

Dear Friends,

If you have ever had the pleasure of knowing any of the six Mottola brothers, sister, or parents (aka Nanna and Pop-Pop) then you have undoubtedly experienced the unconditional love that flows endlessly from this family. Though the family has experienced what seems like a never ending string of tragedies over the past three years (with the deaths of their grandmother, father, and recently their sister) you won't find them stewing in their sorrow but rather you will find them reaching out to others to help however and whenever they can. You are rarely greeted with a handshake but instead you are embraced with the notorious Mottola hug.

The recent San Diego fires have dealt another tragic blow to the Mottola family. Steve Mottola, who is best known as 'Santa' for his jolly laughter, large belly, and even larger heart, lost his home to the Harris Ranch fire which, consumed just about every inch of the Mottola ranch that is located in Dulzura. Every personal possession of Steve's, his wife Edie, and their daughter Ashley, was lost in the fire as they had very little warning and little time to evacuate. Steve and his wife are more often referred to as 'Ma and Pa' by the hundreds of young men and women that have adopted them as their extended parents over the years. Many of these were once boys and girls of the baseball and softball teams that Steve had coached for 15+ years in Santana (Santee) little league.

Steve's brother Bill, who also resides on the ranch with his wife and three daughters, has sustained significant damage to their home from the smoke, ash, and 100+ mile/hr winds that swept through the Mottola ranch last Sunday. Bill is equally loved by his family, friends, and neighbors for his caring nature, kindness, and generosity as well as his relentless passion for the San Diego Padres and Chargers. Like his brother, Bill and his family have opened their home to many persons in need over the years.

The 'Mottola Ranch' has been considered the 'home away from home' by many of Steve and Bill's friends and family. For my wife, daughters, and I, the Mottola ranch has been a sanctuary when we needed to escape from the tragedies that have plagued our family this past three years. I have never felt closer to God than when I was sitting on a rock on the hillside above the ranch and prayed. I can't possibly express the sadness that I felt when I looked across that same hillside yesterday and saw it scared so badly by the fire that raged through the area.

Unfortunately due to the rural location of the Mottola ranch and the devastation that occurred in San Diego from the 2003 fire storms, the Mottola homes were declared un-defendable by the insurance companies and thus they must bear the financial burden of the loss caused by the firestorms. The amount of funds offered by FEMA and other agencies is barely enough to replace the foundation of Steve's very modest (~ 800 square foot) home. The cost of replacing the bare necessities such as clothing, furniture, appliances, etc is insurmountable.

As Steve and I were viewing the remains of his home yesterday and attempting to contemplate the tasks that lie ahead towards trying to rebuild his home, he again amazed me with his never ending care, and his nature for putting the needs of others before his own. As Steve was compiling a mental list of the items lost in the fire his first thoughts were not of his family mementos, furniture, or big screen TV, but what saddened him the most was the Santa suit that was destroyed in the fire. Steve had purchased the new Santa suit (with leather boots and belt to match) last year for \$800 to replace the one that he had worn on many past Christmas holidays which brought joy to the many children that he

had the pleasure to share his lap with at various family and friends home but more importantly at the shelters in San Diego that he visited each Christmas holidays. This Christmas was already going to be an extremely emotional time for the entire Mottola family as it will be the first Christmas since the death of Steve and Bill's only sister, Donna Fischer, who passed away suddenly in March due to a lethal combination of medications that were prescribed to her. Donna was the matriarch of the Mottola family and without exaggeration had touched thousands of lives in San Diego and her community of Santee. Her loss alone is more than any family should have to bear in one year.

Steve, Bill and their wives have worked very hard their entire lives. They have put their life's savings, along with a lot of sweat and tears, into their dream of turning the Dulzura property they purchased in 2002 into a dude ranch that someday could be enjoyed by everyone that needed an escape from their everyday fast paced lives. In a matter of a few hours those dreams went up in smoke by the wrath of Mother Nature.

So, Santa needs a new suit and help rebuilding the dream! If you would like to help Santa and his elves get back on their feet and return the jolly to his laughter, please consider sending a donation to the following:

The 'Mottola Relief Fund'  
California Coast Credit Unit  
PO Box 502080  
San Diego, California 92150-2080

Routing # 322281578  
Account # 82535701

California Coast Credit Unit is a member of the Credit Unit (CU) Network with member locations throughout the US. Donations can be made by mailing your check (made out to the Mottola Relief Fund) to the address indicated above or at any CU Network location which can be obtained via [www.CUSwirl.com](http://www.CUSwirl.com). When mailing checks, please indicate the Routing and Account numbers on both the address and the check.

The entire Mottola family and their friends appreciate your generosity and kindness. Your prayers are equally welcomed and appreciated.

God bless you and your family,

Sincerely,

Frank Mottola

[fmottola@cox.net](mailto:fmottola@cox.net)  
(619) 992-5065