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Aaron Rodgers was honored as the North Valley Philanthropist of the Year in front of a crowd of nearly 300 people at the inaugural Community Foundation Gala.

The Gala, hosted by North Valley Community Foundation, was held Thursday at Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.'s Big Room.

Rodgers, a Chico native and longtime NFL star quarterback, has established wildfire recovery and COVID-19 small-business funds at North Valley Community Foundation. He seeded the funds with seven-figure donations and also attracted millions of dollars in donations.

Rodgers, who was preparing to host a charity flag football event in Southern California and could not attend, sent a video that was played for the attendees. He thanked NVCF and stressed the importance of giving in his speech.

"I really appreciate this. I'm just trying to do my best to help out," he said. "I've been really blessed in this life and my goal is just to give back. I know there are so many people in the crowd tonight who are doing the same thing, every single day.

"This award means a lot to me but I share it with all of you as well and my beloved Butte County and Chico, California – always near and dear to my heart. ... Have a beautiful night. I'm going to keep on helping out and I hope you do, too."

Alexa Benson-Valavanis, NVCF president and CEO, talked about how Rodgers called immediately after the Camp Fire asking, "How can I help?"

"These words conveyed everything we would learn about his heart in the years to come: Aaron Rodgers shows up," she said. "He is more humble and kind than we could have ever imagined. His compassion is genuine and this place is his home.

“Whether he was hosting ‘Jeopardy’ or playing in a celebrity golf tournament or wearing NVCF cleats on national TV, he lifted us up whenever he could. He is a legend to us.”

Benson-Valavanis also received special recognition in honor of her 20th year as NVCF leader. In her time as president and CEO, the foundation has raised nearly \$200 million for charitable projects in the North Valley and throughout the world.