

Group to Help Quake Victims Cut Red Tape

By KAY HWANGBO

May 28, 1994

One of the most frustrating things about being an earthquake survivor is having to deal with huge bureaucracies that put you on hold, hang up on you or tell you that you just missed being eligible for aid.

A new organization has sprung up that promises to be in quake victims' corner when they tackle problems such as inadequate insurance payments, contractor fraud and government red tape.

"It's so important for them to hear, 'Let me try for you,' " said C. George Kehrer, executive director of Community Assisting Recovery (CARE), which has set up shop in Northridge. "They need human contact outside of those bureaucratic voices that say, 'That's not my job description.' And people are so vulnerable."

Working in donated office space at 11145 Tampa Ave., Suite 19B, Kehrer, two other victims of the 1991 Oakland fires and Northridge quake survivor Kathy Trapani take about 40 calls a day. Most people ask what to do about an insurance adjuster's damage estimate that seems too low.

Although Kehrer came to CARE as a survivor of the Oakland disaster, the group emphasizes its local roots. In fact, it split off from United Policyholders, a Northern California-based consumer group dealing with insurance issues, to focus on specific concerns of earthquake victims and broaden its mission to include non-insurance issues.

Next month, the group will hold separate meetings for policy holders of different insurers so they can meet and talk about their concerns.

The following meetings are scheduled:

- * Thursday--Farmers networking meeting, Unitarian Society, 9550 Haskell Ave., North Hills, 7 p.m.
- * June 7--Meeting for policy holders whose insurance companies do not have their own meeting, Unitarian Society, 9550 Haskell Ave., North Hills, 7 p.m.
- * June 9--Allstate Insurance meeting, Cal State Northridge University Club, 7 p.m.
- * June 10--20th Century Insurance meeting, St. Euphrasia Church, 11766 Shoshone Ave., Granada Hills, 7 p.m..
- * June 12--CARE open house at its Northridge offices, 3 to 5 p.m.

For information, call (818) 363-3062.