

# OC LEADER BOARD

Opinion, Analysis, Insight

## Let's Tell Our Homeless Veterans Welcome Home This Year

Veterans Day.

It's the day we honor and thank those who have selflessly put their lives on the line to serve in the Armed Forces. Our veterans exude strength, bravery, resilience and sacrifice.

Sadly, life is not always easy for our veterans once they return to civilian life. As a result, hundreds of veterans in Orange County have ended up experiencing homelessness. The 2019 Point In Time Count revealed a total of 311 homeless veterans in Orange County. Out of that population, 68% were unsheltered while 32% were in either an emergency or transitional shelter.

It's hard to imagine that after years of service many veterans don't have a safe and comfortable space—a place to return to called home.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic in full swing, it's more important than ever that we as a community say, "welcome home" to veterans experiencing homelessness. With the support of Orange County property owners and landlords such as **Jerry Mendoza** of **Main Street Management**, we are making progress towards ending Veteran Homelessness through our WelcomeHomeOC program, which reduces the time involved in the search for housing by increasing the availability of rental units.

Mendoza, a veteran of the **United States Marine Corps.**, is a property manager with Orange County-based management company Main Street Management, which is currently part of our WelcomeHomeOC property owner network.

As a veteran himself, after joining Main Street Management two years ago, Mendoza advocated for the company to begin accepting Section 8 rental assistance housing vouchers. He understands the true power and positive impact that a home can have on veterans, and especially those who are homeless in Orange County.

Then, when he found out about WelcomeHomeOC in 2019, he urged his company to get involved. So far, Mendoza has helped house several veterans in just one year in apartment complexes across Orange County, with high hopes of housing many more in the coming months.

Mendoza has a message to other property owners in Orange County who are considering joining the WelcomeHomeOC property owner network: "We all have to do our part. No one is a burden and we are all human. WelcomeHomeOC eliminates any fears that property owners might have—and at the end of the day, there is no better feeling than helping those who have made you a priority and helped you re-

main safe in your lifetime."

WelcomeHomeOC was designed to streamline the process and provides financial incentives such as double security deposits, sign-on bonus, holding fees, and other assurances for Orange County landlords who rent units to individuals, veterans, and families with a housing voucher.

The program has been endorsed by the Apartment Association of Orange County and the California Apartment Association, and has been recognized as an exceptional program and exemplary by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. So far,

more than 60 Orange County property owners are a part of the WelcomeHomeOC network.

What affects one of us affects all of us. Stable, permanent housing is an essential human need. Most important of all, it provides safety and comfort to homeless individuals as they strive to improve their overall quality of life. And our homeless veterans deserve, at the very least, just that.

For that reason, I invite Orange County's rental property owners to join Jerry Mendoza and many other committed owners in the WelcomeHomeOC network, so that this year on Veterans Day our local veterans hear the words "Welcome Home."

*Editor's Note: Susan B. Parks was honored in 2019 with a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for the innovative work being done for the initiative United to End Homelessness, a program to reduce OC homelessness to a "functional zero" by 2024.*



**By Susan B. Parks,**  
President and CEO,  
Orange County United Way



**Jerry Mendoza, Main Street Management, part of WelcomeHomeOC landlord network**



**"I think I would still be living in a car right now without United Way" - Day, Army Veteran housed through WelcomeHomeOC**



The unveiling of United to End Homelessness' public mural that depicts what each homeless individual, including veterans, deserves: a safe and comfortable place to call home. Left to right: Rev. Sarah Heath, First United Methodist Church of Costa Mesa; Brian Peterson, mural artist and founder of Faces of Santa Ana; Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley; Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris; Susan B. Parks, president and CEO, Orange County United Way; Becks Heyhoe, executive director, United to End Homelessness; Charles Antis, founder and CEO, Antis Roofing and member of United to End Homelessness' Executive Council; Damir Lujan, mural artist and founder of Zao Art.

## ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

18500 Von Karman Ave., Suite 150, Irvine, CA 92612  
(949) 833-8373 • FAX (949) 833-8751 www.ocbj.com

### PUBLISHER

RICHARD REISMAN reisman@ocbj.com | ext. 219

### VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

LAURA GARRETT garrett@ocbj.com | ext. 210

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MARK MUELLER mueller@ocbj.com | ext. 226

### EXECUTIVE EDITOR

PETER J. BRENNAN brennan@ocbj.com | ext. 229

### EDITOR AT LARGE

RICK REIFF reiff@ocbj.com

### INTERIM COPY EDITOR

JAMI DERBY derby@ocbj.com | ext. 270

### REPORTERS

KEVIN COSTELLOE costelloe@ocbj.com | ext. 225

KARI HAMANAKA hamanaka@ocbj.com | ext. 271

KATIE MURAR murar@ocbj.com | ext. 216

JESSIE YOUNT yount@ocbj.com | ext. 224

### RESEARCH DIRECTOR

MEGHAN KLIEWER kliewer@ocbj.com | ext. 231

### EXECUTIVE DINING COLUMNIST

CHRISTOPHER TRELA ctrela@offthemenuc.com

### PHILANTHROPY COLUMNIST, NONPROFITS

KIM HAMAN philanthropy@ocbj.com

### PHOTOGRAPHER

LAUREL HUNGERFORD

### EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

EMILY SANTIAGO-MOLINA deals@ocbj.com | ext. 208

### ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

STEVE GALL gall@ocbj.com | ext. 221

### DIRECTOR OF AD OPERATIONS

SUMER BOWLES sbowles@ocbj.com | ext. 223

### CUSTOM CONTENT EDITOR

JAMI DERBY derby@ocbj.com | ext. 270

### SIGNATURE EVENTS DIRECTOR

TIFFANY BONANDO bonando@ocbj.com | ext. 227

### SIGNATURE EVENTS MANAGER

MELANIE COLLINS collins@ocbj.com | ext. 209

### MARKETING COORDINATOR

KRISTEN PORTER porter@ocbj.com | ext. 212

### NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

BRENDA BALSIGER balsiger@ocbj.com | ext. 220

### PHILANTHROPY PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

AMY SFREDDO sfreddo@ocbj.com | ext. 246

### SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

SHELDON ASCHER ascher@ocbj.com | ext. 217

### SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGERS

TERI AIKIN aikin@ocbj.com | ext. 211

CORINNE DEKKER dekker@ocbj.com | ext. 228

BOBBY DORMAN dorman@ocbj.com | ext. 201

CAROL FOX fox@ocbj.com | ext. 213

KIM LOPEZ lopez@ocbj.com | ext. 263

### CIRCULATION COORDINATOR/AR SPECIALIST

KELLY BOWLES bowles@ocbj.com | ext. 238

### CIRCULATION SPECIALIST

ABBY MADAIN madain@ocbj.com | ext. 243

### CIRCULATION MARKETING MANAGER

SOFIA RANALLI ranalli@ocbj.com | ext. 215

### PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

RICH LOYD loyd@ocbj.com | ext. 245

### GRAPHIC ARTISTS

BRETTE MILLER miller@ocbj.com | ext. 240

MARTIN NILCHIAN nilchian@ocbj.com | ext. 253

### DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

SARA HAMILTON hamilton@ocbj.com | ext. 203

### DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTING & FINANCIAL REPORTING

LUIS MARTINEZ martinez@ocbj.com | ext. 204

### EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER

ANGELA PHILLIPS phillips@ocbj.com | ext. 218

### FRONT OFFICE MANAGER

ANKIT PATEL patel@ocbj.com | ext. 200