

**For Immediate Release**

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**Friends of Friendship Shelter Host Dinners at Home**

***Funds Raised to Help Orange County Homeless to Rebuild Lives***

Friendship Shelter is working with 30 - 40 philanthropic locals to host dinners this winter to raise funds to help support those who are trying to find their way back to homes of their own.

Volunteer hosts assume responsibility for the dinners, and in return, invitees donate \$125 or more per guest to Friendship Shelter, an organization based in Laguna Beach and San Clemente that provides programs to help those who are willing and able to restore their lives.

The 16<sup>th</sup> annual *Dinners Across Laguna and Beyond* is expected to raise more than \$100,000 to help fund several programs and services.

Dinners will be held not only in Laguna Beach, but throughout South County.

“Laguna Beach is our home and where the base of our support has been, for which we are most grateful, but we are hoping that other communities will join our effort,” says Executive Director, Carol Rhoads.

Event chair and member of the Board, Joy Dittberner, invites volunteers to host dinners large or small, with all proceeds going to the organization.

“Dinners begin January 26<sup>h</sup> and continue through March,” Dittberner says. “The date is flexible – what matters more is that hosts create a gathering that suits them and their guests, so that a good time is had by all, while helping to support such an important cause.”

Past events have included an intimate candlelight dinner for six, a pot-luck neighborhood party, large cocktail gatherings, or dinner at a local restaurant. Many are co-hosted by friends or neighbors.

“This is perhaps the organization’s most popular event because it is so intimate,” says Rhoads. “Above all, as people open their homes to their friends, they are all reminded how important the safety and comfort of home can be, which is something our residents are struggling to re-establish for themselves.”

Friendship Shelter, founded in 1988, assists homeless adults regain self-sufficiency and become fully productive members of the community. A 60-day self-sufficiency program, located in Laguna Beach, for which there is always a waiting list, provides a home-base, three meals daily and a wide range of support services to 31 men and women. Residents are expected to work, save money and develop skills to rebuild their lives. Graduates may apply to Henderson House, located in San Clemente, where 25 residents live for up to one year, allowing them to consolidate their gains and continue on the path to a more productive lives. The agency is funded through the generosity of philanthropic individuals, foundations and organizations throughout the area.

To learn more about hosting a dinner, or how you might help, please contact Joy Dittberner, 949.499.7891 or [yogijoy@cox.net](mailto:yogijoy@cox.net).

To learn more about Friendship Shelter, go to [www.friendshipshelter.org](http://www.friendshipshelter.org).