

NEWS RELEASE

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Friendship Shelter Made New Friends, Honored Old at June 4 Event

Laguna Beach, Calif., June 20, 2006 -- **Friendship Shelter**, a homeless shelter for unaccompanied adults, welcomed about 100 people to an elegant Sunday afternoon donor event at Seven Degrees on June 4. Speakers were **Laguna Beach Mayor Elizabeth Pearson-Schneider**, two shelter graduates who shared their personal stories, and event chair **Joy Dittberner**, who noted that the popular images of our region presented in reality shows by the media do not reflect what Orange County is about.

“I, for one, am not happy with the image some of these shows project of ‘the OC.’ I want our true spirit to be seen -- a strong and caring community that reaches out to help others less fortunate than the people we see on those reality television shows,” said Dittberner.

She went on to note that every day throughout Orange County, there are approximately 35,000 homeless people in need of help and the type of services that Friendship Shelter provides.

“The line between self-sufficiency and homelessness is often breached by a single event - a work layoff, an illness, a lost paycheck, a divorce,” she added. “One blow from life when you don’t have a safety net of friends and family to help you out can be devastating. That’s what Friendship Shelter is for – to help people to get back on their feet and into the mainstream of society.”

Pearson-Schneider also spoke from the heart, recounting meeting a young woman during a recent tour of the shelter. The Laguna Beach mayor said she was impressed at the strictness of the program and its emphasis on getting people back into the work force. She praised the shelter's work and emphasized the need to support it.

“Friendship Shelter has an outstanding reputation for helping our fellow citizens reclaim their self-esteem, their dignity, their relationships and their roles as productive members of the community. Clients come from throughout Orange County and beyond, but only 11% of the shelter’s funding comes through government agencies. The vast majority of funding must come from you and me,” she stressed.

The Seven Degrees reception recognized members of the shelter’s Renaissance Club, who have each pledged to donate \$1,000 annually for five years. This subset of donors was founded seven years ago to provide a stable base of funds; Renaissance Club has since become the single, largest source of unrestricted funds for the shelter’s programming, and has contributed more than \$560,000 since it began.

Dittberner thanked the sponsors who made the party possible: **Seven Degrees** generously donated the space and **Envelopments** helped fund the invitations, for which **John Crane** provided the design and printing.

Musical entertainment was provided free of charge by **Jake and Mary Hill**, guitar and vocals, and **Dain Knoll** on keyboards.

Founded in 1988, Friendship Shelter’s emergency facility in Laguna Beach provides numerous vital services to homeless adults who come from all over Orange County and beyond: a bed and three meals per day for up to 60 days; a comprehensive rehabilitation program including extensive counseling and support services; life skills training; employment development; access to medical and legal aid; financial counseling and more. It is the only year-round emergency shelter in south Orange County for homeless unaccompanied adults. After completing the emergency shelter’s rigorous 60-day program, residents are eligible to move into Friendship Shelter’s self-supporting, transitional housing unit in San Clemente, Henderson House, where they continue to reinforce the life skills they learned through the shelter’s program.

Since its inception, more than 5,000 adults have received life-saving services through its programs. New volunteers are always welcome; for more information about Friendship Shelter and ways to become involved, contact Development Director Jennifer Miller at (949) 494-6928 or www.friendshipshelter.org

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