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What Every Parent's Talking About

parenting

PLUS

*Mom's Guide
to Picking a
Preschool*

THE MOM ISSUE

Mother's Day Makeover Contest
A Guide to Mommy & Me in OC
OC Moms Who Give Back



Curiosity, wonder, and discovery
are at the heart of everything we do.



Moms Who Care

Get to know some local moms who give back in their own unique ways.

By Jessica Peralta

Ashley Yee

Director of Family Support at Beyond Blindness in Santa Ana
City: Orange

Family: Eric O'Brien; Callan O'Brien, 3, Wrenly O'Brien, 9 months

How you give back: "I try to give back to the community through the work I do at Beyond Blindness, of course, by serving an underserved population in the Orange County community by helping to build a community for those blind and visually impaired so that they may feel empowered and confident to thrive and succeed. My work at Beyond Blindness is a wonderful extension of the work I promised to do as a social worker, to continue to fight for the unjust and underserved and advocate for individuals to live

their lives whole. As I have spent my career working and volunteering with children with special needs, I continue to ally and advocate every day for these individuals.

"Beyond my work, I search for opportunities to make an impact. I have served on several boards of directors within the community, whether serving as an active board member to being the board chair, I have found different passions to volunteer my time, experience and expertise to.

"Lastly, for the last 15 years, I have dedicated my time to serve in a variety of roles to the Gamma Phi Beta Sorority on an international and local university level, where I have advised and coached countless young women in their roles and responsibilities to the organization and to inspire the next generation of strong women."



Floridel Martinez

Marketing Director at South County Outreach in Irvine

City: Tustin

Family: Husband, JP; Leo, 7, Luna, 3

How you give back: "As a working mother, it is important as well for me to play an active role in my children's education and volunteer as often as possible in the classroom and as part of PTO events and projects throughout the year. In professional life and current role at South County Outreach, I support a team that provides hunger and homeless prevention services to residents in Orange County and surrounding communities. We run one of the largest free food programs in Orange County that provides fresh and shelf-stable foods to over 3,000 residents each month, and 33 per-

cent of those served are children under the age of 18. In Orange County alone, one in five children do not have enough food to eat and the work I support ensures that children and families in need have access to nutritious, high-quality food to thrive and be successful in their everyday lives. In my community, I serve on various nonprofit board of directors, including serving as the alumni representative on the Ryman Arts board of directors, an arts education nonprofit serving Los Angeles and Orange County high school students by offering intensive out-of-school studio art instruction, college and career guidance, art supplies and support services — all at no cost. Having experienced this program myself, giving back through the arts is an important part of my work."



Carrie Benavides

Manager of Development and Operations for Max-Love Project in Orange

City: Rancho Cucamonga

Family: Husband, Matt; Bodhi, 11, Declan, 9

How you give back: "I wear many hats at this small nonprofit to help ensure we continue to thrive and grow in our community. We are dedicated to improving the quality of life of families facing childhood cancers, pediatric rare diseases and chronic hospitalizations with evidence-based culinary medicine, integrative care and emotional health. Our programs are available online and in-person, both in the community and hospital-based settings. Our nationwide online platform and physical locations in Southern California and Savannah, Georgia provide accessible support, while clinician and provider education ensures lasting impact.

"I have always loved doing things to make people feel good, whether it's making sure someone is welcome, comfortable, or just feeling seen and heard. I've found there are so many ways to make a difference in the lives of others and the reward of helping in little and big ways fills my heart with so much joy. When someone is feeling sad or low, I try to find ways that will lift them up and bring a smile to their face.

"Any opportunity to give back to causes our family cares about and causes our friends and family ask us to take notice of is also very important. I love it when my friends or family reach out to me with a passion of theirs to help a nonprofit or community organization. I won't turn down an opportunity to support with a monetary donation or time spent helping out. These experiences are priceless and that's what community is all about."



Karin Koch

Executive Director of University Lab Partners, Irvine
City: Irvine

Family: Tim; Savannah, 11, Victoria, 6

How you give back: “Serving the community can come in all shapes and sizes. Through the work of University Lab Partners, we help founders developing breakthrough medical technologies to be successful. As these companies we support grow and create jobs I am passionate about, inspiring the next generation of STEM innovators by bringing awareness and access to the innovation economy. I also serve on the board of Vital Link, a nonprofit organization focused on providing career technical education opportunities for OC students through a wide range of sectors and activities.

Lastly, performing arts has always been at the forefront of what I love, so I also volunteer with the Pas De Deux Guild at the Segerstrom Center [for] the Arts to support the next generation of dancers and dance enthusiasts.

“I believe that giving time to serve my community with my family and friends within the areas I love and appreciate are critical to happiness and health.

“As years pass, it becomes increasingly important for me to spend my time for service and/or creating impact, in areas that are not only important for me, but for my family and friends as well. I used to do a lot without deep impact, but today I am more. I really want to be laser focused and make a deep impact in areas I am passionate about.”



Emerald Archer

Chief Program Officer for Girls Inc. of Orange County in Santa Ana

City: San Clemente

Family: Husband, Nathan Crockett; Zella Crockett, 4

How you give back: “Before joining Girls Inc. of Orange County, I was a political science professor teaching at a women’s university. During my time as a professor, I always enjoyed mentoring young students, serving as an advisor to student groups, and connecting with my community through community-based learning opportunities. At Girls Inc. of Orange County, I use my background as an educator to think about ways to improve the lives of girls throughout the county. I feel fortunate that the programming we provide makes a positive impact on the lives of 10,000-plus girls who will be our leaders of tomorrow.

“Studying gender equity, writing on gender justice and creating girl-focused programming that is research-based has been the common threads running through

the textile of my life. What inspired all of this? Growing up in my mother’s home — an immigrant and single parent — and watching her overcome obstacles and pull women up with her along the way.

“I have long been interested in the advancement of women and girls and have sought out opportunities to explore the questions related to women’s experience in non-traditional sectors. I started my career by studying stereotypes and how they [can] impact a woman’s performance in the US military. The scope of this work expanded as I studied the economic security, health and educational opportunity of California women and girls through establishing the Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary’s University. My efforts in these roles enabled me to see clearly — through research and collaboration with girls’ initiatives — that the most significant impact I can make in a woman’s life is situated upstream from the collegiate level.”



Shraddha J. Patel

Senior Recruiter at UCI Health Sciences in Irvine
City: Irvine

Family: Husband, Hitesh; Jai, 12, Shailen, 10

How you give back: “Over the last 10-plus years, I have been connected to giving back to kids through the work that my previous co-founders and I did through our blog and community, Chai Mommas. One of the main charities we supported and which I am still connected to is Manav Sadhna, a nonprofit based out of Gujarat, India. Guided by Mahatma Gandhi’s message to love all, serve all and anchored entirely in the spirit of compassion and kindness, this group helps transform underprivileged communities through a range of initiatives. They provide services in holistic education, youth empowerment, women’s empowerment, senior care, nutrition, health and hygiene, and livelihoods.

“We partnered with Manav Sadhna for many years to help disadvantaged kids gain skills (arts and crafts) that

could help sustain their livelihood outside of school education. We helped fundraise thousands of dollars to help support various initiatives that are still going strong. I still stay in touch, give back personally and will always be connected to the Manav Sadhna specifically to do what I can for the disadvantaged children and women there.

“Giving back with my friends and the online community we had created, sparked in me a great feeling to help — even with the smallest of acts. It allowed me to have such a meaningful and transformative experience. I was able to intimately connect with the community there in India, learning more about myself in the process and feel an immense amount of joy of helping others in need through it all. I felt like (and still feel like) I was a part of a global family connected by these shared experiences rooted in the spirit of service and compassion for all. I learned even those little things, which so many of us can do, have a tremendous effect.”



Danielle Judd

CEO and Founder of FarmHouse Rescue 501c3 nonprofit organization in Trabuco Canyon

City: Trabuco Canyon

Family: Jonathan; River, 19, Reagan, 8, Remington, 7

How you give back: “FarmHouse Rescue has saved over a hundred farm animals. The greatest and most impactful mission of FarmHouse Rescue is the Smile Box Program. I knew I had to connect these animals to children in hospitals undergoing cancer treatment but couldn’t bring the farm to the hospital so I brought the hospital to the farm. Setting up cameras throughout the farm at animal level called Smile Cams, children log in 24 hours to watch their farm friends. That was not enough, I knew I had to give these children a relationship with these animals and the Smile Box Program was born. These boxes are given to children undergoing cancer treatment at hospitals during

their infusion sessions. Each box contains a cuddly farm plushie, a warm hat, art projects, a fidget toy, a fun straw, stickers, a ring pop, a sticky hand, a posable figure and a fun pen. Most importantly, it includes a penpal kit from one of the animals on the farm, initiating the children’s penpal journey with the rescue animals at FarmHouse Rescue. The children write letters to the animals and yes, the animals write back with some sort of art and introduce them to a new animal on the farm. When a child is better, and in some cases end of life, they come with up to 20 guests as a Guest of the Farm visiting our 28-acre farm sanctuary in Orange County, California filled with a lunch, activities, photographer and a day dedicated to them making memories of happiness.

Today, FarmHouse Rescue is brightening children’s lives through rescue animal interactions — delivering hope one smile at a time.”