



**JAN. – FEB. 2020**

# Orange County Cemetery District

## TRUSTEES

Noel Hatch, Chair  
Maribel Marroquin, Vice Chair  
William E. Nelson  
Kelly Rivers  
Cynthia Ward

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Tim Deutsch, General Manager

## Hundreds Turn Out for Santa Ana Cemetery & Anaheim Cemetery Dia de los Muertos Celebrations

On Saturday, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Orange County Cemetery District hosted two free Dia de los Muertos celebrations for residents to enjoy.

### Santa Ana Cemetery Holds Inaugural Celebration

The District would like to thank the Office of Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do, who co-sponsored our inaugural event at Santa Ana Cemetery. Supervisor Do's office coordinated and provided all the entertainment as well as the wonderful face-painting talents of Beauty Glam Academy. Pastor Ruben Esponda of United Methodist Church began the program at 11 a.m. with a blessing followed by musical performances from the students of Santa Ana High School and Godinez Mariachi. Traditional balletfolklorico dances were also beautifully performed, including a death waltz by Grandeza Mexicana.

### Anaheim Cemetery Holds 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration

The evening event at Anaheim Cemetery began at 5 p.m. with a blessing by Father Bill Cao of St. Anthony Mary Claret Catholic Church. Ballet Folklorico Donaji, who has been a participant in our event since it's inception in 2016, is an Anaheim youth dance group with performers ranging in age from elementary school to high school. They took turns on stage along with five gifted musicians from Mariachi Tierra Mia. Beauty Glam Academy was on hand again for face painting.

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**Performers entertain the crowds at Santa Ana Cemetery Free marigold bouquets were distributed at both events by the District. All photos by Jared Funk Photography.**



## Dia de los Muertos Celebrations

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The Orange County Cemetery District was pleased to provide these events at no cost to the public. During both programs the District also provided free refreshments including pan de muerto, free bouquets of marigolds to decorate gravesites, and free crafts for the children including color your own Dia de las Muertos masks, tissue paper flowers, and Coco activity books.



Performers from Mariachi Tierra Mia and Ballet Folklorico Donaji at the Anaheim program.

Trustee Cynthia Ward who served as Anaheim's Mistress of Ceremonies, gets into the spirit of the occasion with a little help from Beauty Glam Academy.

## Our Military Honored at El Toro Memorial Park's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Veterans Day Observance

Approximately 250 people gathered on Monday, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> to honor and show appreciation to all the men and women who are serving or have served in the United States Armed Forces. This free program featured guest speaker Dr. Linda Fontanilla, Air Force Veteran and Vice President for Student Services at Irvine Valley College. Charlotte Van Steenbergen, a survivor of a Japanese concentration camp, also read her moving poem titled "America's Gift" – a beautiful and poignant declaration of her gratitude for the liberty that can so easily be taken for granted. Also included in the program was a wreath presentation by our local city officials, special music by vocalist John Huntington, bagpipes by Jim Clements, and Taps was played on the bugle by Boy Scout Jeremy Mamaril.



Attendees got a first-hand look at equipment and items from World War I that were provided in a Historical Patriotic Display. The display was provided by Rev. Frank Cook of American Legion Post 862 (not pictured).



VFW Edward J. Kearns Post 6024 provided the Honor Guard Firing Salute.

Photos by Jared Funk Photography



From Left: Aliso Viejo Mayor Ross Chun, Laguna Hills Mayor Don Sedgwick, Mission Viejo Mayor Greg Raths, Lake Forest Council Member Mike James, Mission Viejo Council Member Trish Kelley, Laguna Woods Mayor Pro Tem and District Vice Chair Noel Hatch. Pictured Center: Lake Forest Council Member Scott Voights.

## American Heritage Girls Host 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Wreaths Across America - Placing 1,159 Wreaths on U.S. Veterans' Graves

**REMEMBER****TEACH****HONOR**

American Heritage Girls Troop 356, coordinated another inspiring Wreaths Across America Ceremony, and it just gets bigger and better every year. What started as a handful of volunteers gathered around the flagpole has now become a wonderful event for the cemetery, with well over 150 people in attendance.

We now have six groups selling wreaths for the Veterans at El Toro Memorial Park. Thanks to an incredibly generous sponsorship by the Elks Lodge of Mission Viejo-Saddleback Valley #2444, Wreaths Across America delivered 1,159 wreaths to honor our veterans. The ceremony was held on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m., and honored all branches of the military including those

who are prisoners of war or missing in action. Girls from the Troop escorted a veteran from each branch of the armed services who presented a wreath representing their branch of the military. Because the event, has grown so much, it was moved to the Old Section and a stage and canopy were provided by District Staff. Greg Raths who is the Mayor of Mission Viejo and a retired Marine Corps officer, and Jamie Camunas, the Elks Lodge President, both gave brief remarks.

Following the ceremony, which was conducted entirely by the girls in the Troop, all those in attendance worked to place wreaths on veterans' graves. As

each wreath was placed volunteers were encouraged to speak the veteran's name, thank them for their service, and say a prayer for the veteran's family. This year Wreaths Across America will place over 1.5 million wreaths, at over 1,400 locations across the United States, at sea, and on the beaches of Normandy. But the mission of Wreaths Across America is far more than simply gravesite decoration. Their purpose is threefold – to **REMEMBER** our fallen U.S. Veterans; to **HONOR** those who serve; and finally, to **TEACH** our children the value of freedom. The District would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Ashely Furniture for providing trucking and drivers to transport these wreaths to our cemetery. For more information on Wreaths Across America, please visit [www.wreathsacrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org). Our biggest thanks goes to the girls and adult leaders of American Heritage Girls Troop 356. Your hard work is greatly appreciated!



**A wreath is placed on the park's only Civil War gravesite.** All photos by Jared Funk Photography



## Groundskeeper Rigoberto Ramirez Retires After 30 Years

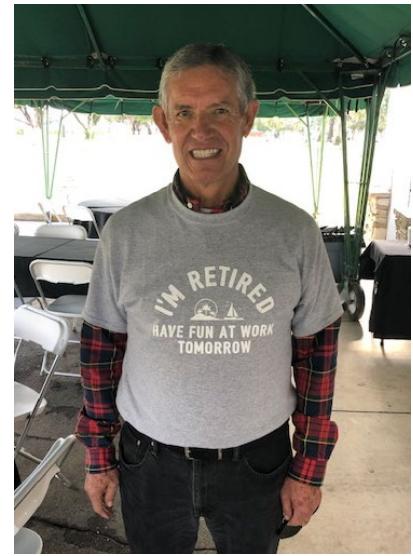
Groundskeeper, Rigoberto Ramirez was all smiles on December 5<sup>th</sup>, as he enjoyed his last day of work at Santa Ana Cemetery, marking the end of thirty-one years of dedicated service with the District.

Rigoberto came to the District in 1988 as an experienced groundskeeper, having already worked for ten years at Fairhaven Memorial Park. During his time with the District he worked at all four of the District cemeteries.

To mark his retirement, the District hosted a special luncheon on site that was attended by almost all of the groundskeepers from all three cemeteries, the cemetery managers, District

staff – both past and present, and a large number of Rigo's family. It was a wonderful afternoon of laughter and memories. As an avid distance runner, GM Deutsch awarded Rigo with a special medallion. Around the edge of the medallion, his name was punctuated on either side by his dates of hire and retirement along with the words, "A Race Well Run".

We wish Rigo and his family all the best as he begins this exciting new chapter in his life. We thank him for his many years of exceptional service. We will miss you Rigo!!



## Board Elects New Chair and Vice Chair for 2020



**2020 Board Chair  
Noel Hatch**

Every December, the Orange County Cemetery District Board of Trustees elects a new Chair and Vice Chair to serve throughout the upcoming calendar year. For 2020, the Chair will be Trustee Noel Hatch (Fifth District), and the Vice Chair will be Trustee Maribel Marroquin (First District).

Prior to coming to the Board, Chair Hatch practiced corporate and business law for over thirty years. He also has an extensive background in community service and is currently the Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Laguna Woods.

Vice Chair Marroquin has served on the Board since 2017 and is a skilled and dedicated public service advocate with a strong record of community engagement.

The District wishes to thank outgoing Chair Cynthia Ward (Fourth District), for her dedicated service to the Board and the District during 2019. Representing the Second District is Trustee Kelly Rivers and Trustee William Nelson represents the Third District. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m. and the public is welcome to attend.

## The District's 2018-19 Annual Audit Shows a Clean Report

While this time of year brings festive holiday celebrations, it also brings the annual financials for the District's Accounting staff. The Finance staff has been working with the District's external auditors, Eide Bailly, LLP over the last two months to complete on-site fieldwork and finalize the audit report of the District's finances. We have once again received an unqualified (or "clean") opinion by the audit firm which indicates a fair and accurate presentation of the financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2019. In addition to assisting the auditors with their fieldwork, our Finance staff has been preparing the supplemental narratives and schedules to our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

In FY 2017-18, the District opted to enhance our reporting and created a CAFR for the first time and submitted the

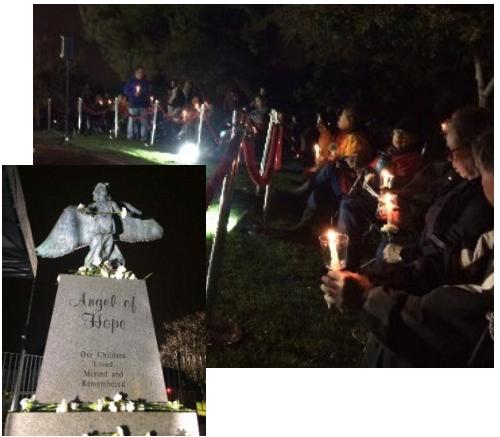
report to the Governmental Finance Officers Association (GFOA) CAFR award program for evaluation. We were notified in the spring of this year, that the District was recognized by GFOA with the annual "Certificate of Achievement of Excellence in Financial Reporting" for our first submission for this award program.

Right now, we are finalizing our FY 2018-19 CAFR for submission to the GFOA CAFR award program for a second consecutive year. A copy of the FY 2017-18 CAFR can be found on the District website by clicking on this link: <https://occemeterydistrict.com/article.cfm?id=45>. We anticipate posting the 2018-19 final audit to the District website in January after the auditor's from Eide Bailly formally present the completed audit to the Trustees at the January Board Meeting.

## 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Angel of Hope Candlelight Service Held for Grieving Parents

Family members grieving the loss of a child were welcomed at the Angel of Hope statue at El Toro Memorial Park on Friday evening, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> for a candlelight service. The Angel was modeled after a statue featured in the book, "The Christmas Box" about a mother who grieves the loss of her child at the base of an angel monument. Every year this program is held so families can come together for a time of remembrance to honor the lives of those lost too soon.

During the program Lisa Popper welcomed those in attendance and Ching Lim read an excerpt from "The Little Prince". Tim McCalmont led the invocation. The keynote speaker was Courtney Ransom who delivered a powerful and deeply personal account of her experiences following the death of her teenage son. Mike Heddleston read a poem titled, "Danielle" which was written by his wife as a tribute to the daughter they lost. Lauren Flores's beautiful voice complimented the program as she sang two selections titled "I Will See You Again" and "Gone Too Soon" and then ended the program by leading the audience in the singing of "Amazing Grace". As always, the emotional heart of the program was the Flower Tribute, where families can come forward, speak the name of their loved one, and present white flowers in their memory at the Angel. Our thanks to all those who worked so hard to make this program possible.



For more information on the Angel of Hope please visit:

[www.careandkindness.org/angelofhope](http://www.careandkindness.org/angelofhope)

## "Longest Night" Memorial Service at Anaheim Cemetery Remembers the Homeless of Orange County



As darkness fell, attendees listened in the candlelight to the reading of names of the 207 people who had passed away on the streets of Orange County during 2019. The memorial wall pictured above, is a labor of love for Hope 4 Restoration Founder, Tim Houchen. It lists all 207 names and even features pictures of some of those who had passed.

The "Longest Night" is an event that recognizes National Homeless Persons Memorial Day and takes place in more than 175 cities across America each year on the winter solstice. Most of us see this as the shortest day of the year, but it is the longest night for persons experiencing homelessness.

The Orange County program has been sponsored by Hope 4 Restoration since 2014, and has been held at Anaheim Cemetery since 2017. Tim Houchen, who was homeless from 2011 to 2015, is the founder of Hope 4 Restoration and led the memorial service which took place on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> from 4 to 6 p.m.

The event featured an invocation by Rev. Karen Stoyanovich of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Anaheim who stated that no human being should die without their life being noted or remembered and that our homeless neighbors should be honored for their courage and determination. Keynote Speaker, Susan B. Parks, who is the President and CEO of Orange County

United Way spoke about how a home changes everything and can even make the difference between life and death. She told the story of a young man who had aged out of foster care only to become homeless, but was able to secure housing through a United Way initiative.

There were also moving messages by Patrick Hogan who read a poem about his experiences while homeless. He stated that just because you die homeless, doesn't mean you are friendless or worthless. Another young woman named Katie shared her experiences about the recent loss of her father, who had died while homeless.

Special music for the program was also provided by a beautiful choir of about 30 members called the Solstice Singers, led by Brian Dehn. Vern Pat Nelson, Anne Marie Randle-Trejo, Elisha Martinez, Brian Dehn and the Solstice Singers ended the program with a 45-minute performance of "Songs of the Orange County Homeless."

## Flower Removal and Holiday Schedule

Every Wednesday, groundskeepers remove and discard flowers and decorations throughout all three cemeteries. Families are encouraged to remove their flowers or decorations on Tuesday night; you can then place the flowers back on the space on Wednesday afternoon. Please remember that the District policy only allows for two items to be placed on gravesites. This includes the in-ground flower vase and one other item. If gravesites exceed the number of allowed items, staff may remove and discard the excess items. Please do not leave items of great monetary or sentimental value on gravesites as the District cannot prevent theft.

The District permits the allowed two items of flowers and/or decorations to be left on gravesites during holidays or for special occasions, such as anniversaries, birthdays and for new interments. Please come to the cemetery office and let us know that you have a special occasion and request that the flowers and decorations be left on the space. We do ask that you empty the vase and place fresh water in the container every four to five days to eliminate mosquito breeding sources, which can cause serious health issues. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated.

**In honor of Valentines' Day , flowers may be placed on gravesites beginning on Thursday, February, 6<sup>th</sup> until Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>.**



A complete listing of the District's extended holiday flower schedule for 2020 is available on our website at [www.occemetarydistrict.com](http://www.occemetarydistrict.com). Just click on the tab for Flowers, Markers and Rules.

## Our Mission Statement and Core Values

*The Orange County Cemetery District manages and maintains Orange County's public cemeteries in a manner that preserves their beauty, dignity, historical and cultural values, and offers affordable interment service for Orange County residents.*

The Trustees and staff of the Orange County Cemetery District are committed to the following values:

Integrity ■ Respect ■ Accountability  
Responsiveness ■ Empathy ■ Transparency  
Appreciation for Diverse Needs

## ORANGE COUNTY CEMETERY DISTRICT

### January and February Board Meetings

The Board of Trustees for the Orange County Cemetery District holds regular meetings the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m. at the District Office located at 25751 Trabuco Road, Lake Forest, CA 92630. The public is welcome to attend.

Agendas are available at least 72 hours prior to each meeting and are also posted on our website at [www.occemetarydistrict.com](http://www.occemetarydistrict.com). In January and February, meetings will be held as follows:

1. **Tuesday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.**
2. **Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.**

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact the District Secretary, Mary Funk at (949) 951-9102 ext. 110.

**The offices at  
Anaheim Cemetery,  
Santa Ana Cemetery, and  
El Toro Memorial Park  
will be closed on:**

**New Year's Day**  
Wednesday - January 1<sup>st</sup>

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**  
Monday – January 20<sup>th</sup>

**Lincoln's Birthday**  
Wednesday – February 12<sup>th</sup>

**Presidents' Day**  
Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>

**All offices are closed on the weekends.**

**Cemetery grounds are open for visitation  
seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

