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Laura's House Honors Extraordinary Volunteers

Local residents recognized by Orange County domestic violence agency

LADERA RANCH, Calif., Nov. 23, 2015 – Deep gratitude filled the room as more than 50 supporters united to celebrate the spirit of giving at the [Laura's House](#) 2015 Volunteer Appreciation event on Thursday, Nov. 19, at the nonprofit's Ladera Ranch headquarters. A dozen outstanding community members were recognized for their year-round volunteer service and support of Laura's House programs and services, including its Resale Stores, counseling and resource center, legal advocacy, emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis hotline, events and more.

In 2015, the Laura's House volunteer program was certified as a [Service Enterprise](#) by Points of Light, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service. Founded by former President George H.W. Bush, the recognition affirms an organization's level of excellence and is awarded to just a small percentage of nonprofits nationwide.

"To date, nearly 400 volunteers collectively donated more than 10,000 hours of unpaid service – and are the reason we are able to change the lives of thousands of domestic violence survivors," said Margaret Bayston, executive director of Laura's House. "They are the unsung heroes in the community who tirelessly work with us to fight domestic violence; this celebration is our way of giving back to them."

Volunteers served the agency in critical roles, including administrative, H.E.A.R.T. program advocates, legal services, hotline support, childcare, case management, house coordinator, resale store customer service and product preparation, events, promotions and as board members.

2015 honorees included:

- **Administration: Joey Ruggiero, Ladera Ranch** – Ruggiero was recognized for his tireless dedication to assisting with all aspects of Laura's House administration and his incredible impact on the nonprofit. In addition to his volunteerism, Ruggiero displays maturity beyond his years as a responsible, well-mannered and smart young man. Ruggiero has proven to be a very valuable volunteer in the Counseling & Resource Center.
- **Fund Development: Natalie Bonhall, Rancho Santa Margarita** – Bonhall was honored for her three years of service to the fundraising/development, events and administration departments. A staple at Laura's House, she recently assumed a larger role with the organization's fund development department and provides consistent volunteer support in many ways.



- **Administration: Mary Bentley, Mission Viejo** – Bentley was recognized for her last five years of service to Laura's House and her outstanding dedication to helping others. A true asset, she single-handedly orchestrates the annual candlelight vigil, which honors teens killed by their abusers and all those affected by teen dating abuse.
- **H.E.A.R.T.: Fe Del Rosario, Dove Canyon** – Del Rosario was recognized for her more than 40 hours spent on entering and managing Laura's House H.E.A.R.T. data.
- **Outreach: Debbie McCormick, Tustin** – McCormick was honored for her initiative and ability to complete a multitude of organizational duties aimed at streamlining the Laura's House database system. She also represents the agency at outreach events to increase awareness in the community. The friendly, compassionate help Hartman provided has been beyond outstanding.
- **Children's Program: Dora Bowman, Aliso Viejo** – A prominent bilingual volunteer in the children's department, Bowman was recognized for her initiative to soothe Spanish speaking kids and their families. She is a favorite not only amongst the children, but also with Laura's House staff.
- **Children's Program: Jenny Rubio, Whittier** – Rubio was honored for her tireless commitment to children at Laura's House. She helps prepare special art projects to entertain the kids and maintain the crafts room.
- **Hotline: Cheri Starr, Irvine** – Starr was recognized for her positive attitude and consistent dedication to the Laura's House crisis hotline. She shows compassion to every caller. Starr is always prepared and accepts every task with a smile.
- **Hotline Program: Ronda Terrell, Ladera Ranch** – A veteran on the Laura's House crisis hotline team, Terrell was recognized for her exceptional ability to calm and guide victims of domestic violence. Additionally, Terrell supports many other departments within Laura's House and is a cherished volunteer.
- **Legal Department: Neda Saghafi, College Park, Maryland** – Saghafi was honored for her large impact within the Laura's House Legal Advocacy Program, which she accomplished in less than a year of service. In her role, Saghafi helps victims of domestic violence prepare for restraining order hearings and accompanies them in the courtroom. Her infectious positive attitude put clients at ease and makes her a favorite with the Laura's House legal team.
- **Resale Store: Anne Schleining, Capistrano Beach** – Schleining, a volunteer at the San Juan Capistrano Resale Store, was recognized for the countless hours she spent launching the volunteer program and streamlining the donation process. Her work at the store has been instrumental in its growth.
- **Resale Store: Mary Ann Murphy, Trabuco Canyon** – Murphy was honored for three years of dedication to the Laura's House Resale Store, where she volunteers at least three days a week. Exuberant, upbeat and a magician at removing stains from fine clothing, Murphy is a key member of the Resale Store team.



The evening included live music, a gourmet taco cart, mingling with Laura's House staff, family and friends and desserts, prizes and awards. For more information about volunteer opportunities, visit <http://www.laurashouse.org/volunteer-opportunities.html> or contact Melanie Galloway at 949-364-3775 or mgalloway@laurashouse.org.

About Laura's House

The mission of Laura's House is to change the social beliefs, attitudes and the behaviors that perpetuate domestic violence while creating a safe space to empower individuals and families affected by abuse.

For more than 20 years, Laura's House has served those whose lives have been affected by domestic violence. Over the past two decades, Laura's House has provided shelter and support services to more than 4,000 battered women and children and counseling, life skills education and legal assistance to nearly 50,000 people. Connect with Laura's House on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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