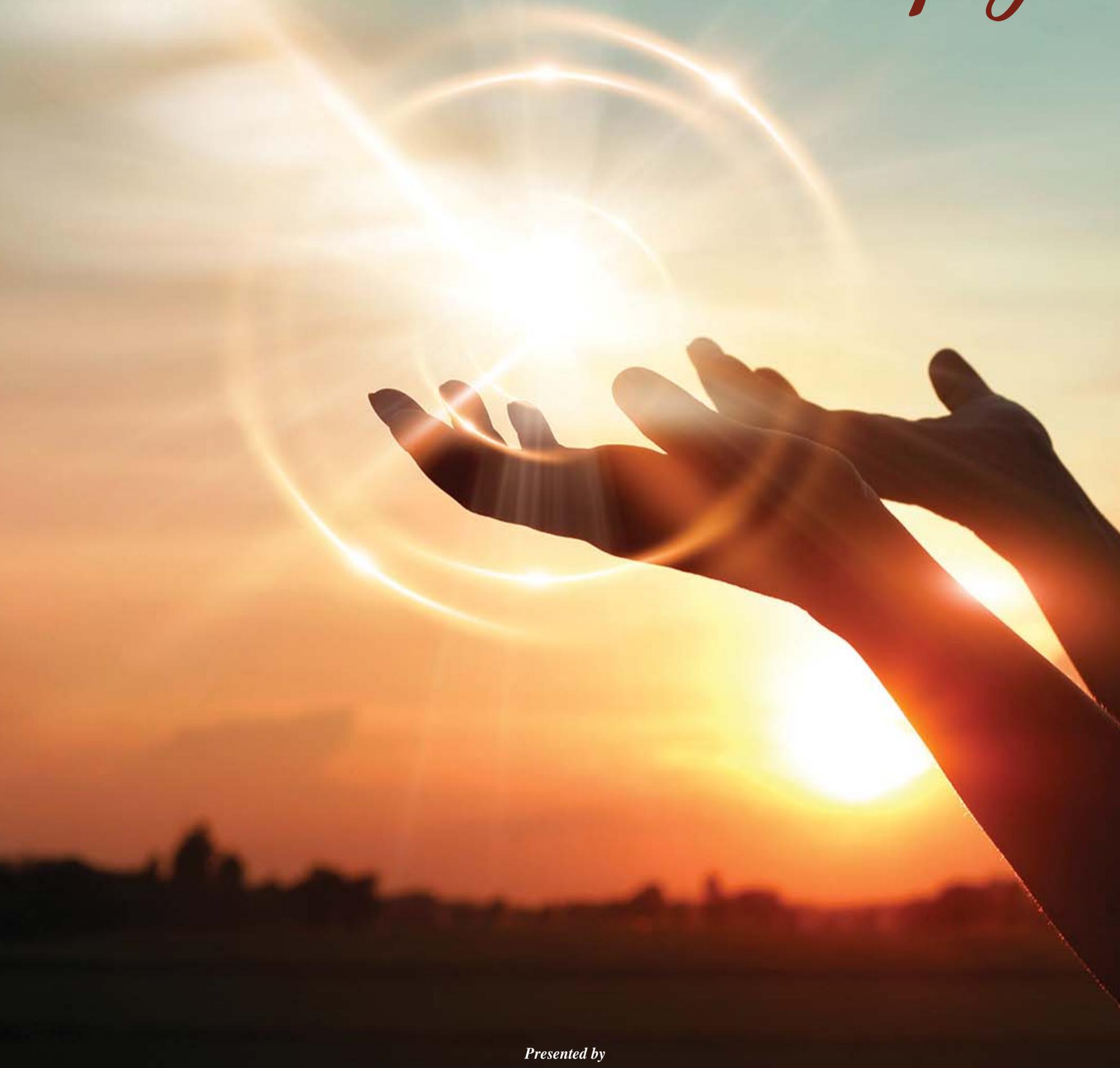


# OC Philanthropy



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# Inside the Journey of Laura's House to New Home

## OC Execs Step Up For Aliso Viejo Facility

By KIM STEMPER

According to the **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)**, nearly 35% of California women and 31% of California men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes. More than one in three children are exposed to domestic violence. By any measure, those are sobering and almost unbelievable numbers.

Domestic violence is prevalent in every community, and affects all people regardless of age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. And its devastating consequences can cross generations and last a lifetime.

**Laura's House** has provided services to survivors of domestic violence for more than 25 years, including 24-hour crisis intervention, shelter, counseling, life skills education and legal advocacy.

In those two and a half decades, nearly 60,000 people's lives have been changed because of Laura's House's comprehensive programs.

"Prevention is the key focus at Laura's House," said **Margaret Bayson**, CEO and executive director of Laura's House.

In addition to the residential and non-residential services the organization provides, Laura's House is actively engaged in community outreach, providing a variety of classes and programs to raise awareness of the issue and inform the public about the resources available to them.

More than 25,000 community members interact with Laura's House each year.

Yet despite the progress Laura's House has made to assist those most in need of help, there continues to be unmet needs that must be addressed. One of the most critical gaps in care is that there has been no centralized location where survivors of domestic violence can access all the resources they need. Rather, domestic violence services and complimentary programs are dispersed throughout Orange County. The different offices can be difficult to access, which can create additional stress on someone trying to escape an already difficult situation.

Laura's House is on a journey to change that.

### Filling the Gaps

Bayson has led Laura's House in her role as executive director for nearly 20 years. Throughout her tenure, she and the Laura's House board of directors have continually searched for ways to improve the organization and expand the effectiveness of its services, whether that is in the programs it offers, the scope of its community awareness campaign or its accessibility to those it strives to help.

By 2018, they realized that Laura's House had outgrown its Ladera Ranch site. There were other issues as well—it was difficult to reach because of its remote location and lack of public transportation options, and there was simply not enough space for classes, training and meetings. The organization couldn't continue to grow and improve until that major issue was resolved.

Bayson and the board began considering options. They reached out directly to their clients: what did they want to see from Laura's House?

It soon became clear that the best option was to create, from the ground up, exactly the kind of resource center that could serve as a



New Aliso Viejo facility runs 19K SF

vital resource for all Southern California, a "one-stop shop" where domestic violence survivors could easily access all the services they need. In addition, the new facility would be a place where the community could gather to learn more about the epidemic of domestic abuse, through classes, training and awareness events.

### The Journey Begins

That was when Laura's House launched **The Power of the Journey** capital campaign with the goal of establishing the new **Laura's House Domestic Violence Resource Center (DVRC)** in Aliso Viejo. Board members **Cheryl Osborn**, president and CEO, **Casco Contractors Inc.** in Irvine, and **Wayne Pinnell**, managing partner of Irvine accounting firm **Haskell & White LLP**, took the reigns as co-chairs.

"The capital campaign isn't really about the building, per se," Pinnell said. "The building is the vehicle. The money is to build the total infrastructure and programs."

The committee wanted to make sure that the people they served had an active voice in the process. "We did thousands of surveys, asking every client who walked in what it is we don't provide that you need," recalled Pinnell. "We asked them: if you could wave a wand, what would you wish for?"

The results of the surveys showed their clients' desire to case managers for non-residential clients to support them as they worked toward developing self-sufficiency; more training to help them understand what they had been through and how to recover, such as establishing healthy boundaries; and expanded counseling services. These were in addition to the resources Laura's House had already been providing for years, such as children's services, legal services, transitional housing, life skills and more.

From the administrative side, the new building had to be in a more easily accessible central location, provide enhanced security, enhanced training capacity, and space to expand existing programs.

### Finding the Unicorn

"We called it the 'unicorn building,'" Pinnell said.

"We wanted a building big enough to



Fundraising lesson from Wayne Pinnell, Margaret Bayson, and Cheryl Osborn

grow into, we'd like a building with warehouse space so we could create another collection center for our retail stores, and there was a need for a large group room, enough for conference capability, and we needed parking. Plus, we needed to be near bus drop offs and we needed to be near the 73 corridor."

The brokers the committee brought on board to help locate "the unicorn" anticipated that it would take several months to find the ideal location, so it came as a great surprise to everyone that they found the building so quickly. The 19,000-square-foot building was close to public transportation, had tenants to help defray costs and was ready for immediate occupancy. The facility provides much-needed space for future expansion of on-residential programming.

"The building literally popped up within a week," Osborn said. "It was everything we wanted: it was the right location, the right size. And the best part? It's address: 33 Journey." The street name was a sheer coincidence, but it seemed like everything was starting to fall into place.

### Early Donors

The Power of the Journey capital campaign received its first major donation not

long after it was launched. **Laura Khouri**, president of Irvine multifamily firm **Western National Property Management** and a Power of the Journey campaign committee member, and her husband **Michael Hayde**, chairman of the board and CEO of parent company **Western National Group**, which builds and invests in apartments, donated \$1 million.

That initial funding combined with \$1 million of Laura's House's own financial resources and a \$4.2 million loan from **Farmers & Merchants Bank** enabled Laura's House to buy the building at 33 Journey.

"Laura's House has been my personal passion for over 15 years, and I am both proud and humbled to be a part of a team leading us toward this exciting milestone in the organization's history," Khouri said. "The new supportive service programs will offer hope, healing and transformation for our clients and their children as they journey down their own paths of violence free and independent lives."

Another notable donation of \$1.5 million came from **The Joe MacPherson** fund. Its president, **Anne MacPherson**, is on the Laura's House board. The **Sunshine Fund**, the **Ueberroth Family Foundation**, **Casco Contractors**, the **Gabois Family**, the **Stack**

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## Laura's House

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**Family Foundation** and the **Gochbauer Family Foundation** are among the other early donors.

Support has come in other ways as well. When renovations to the new building began, all the contractors contributed in-kind items.

"The subcontractors were phenomenal in what they were willing to give," said Osborn, who, as a contractor, oversaw the interior renewal.

"A door contractor donated all of the doors—more than 40 in all. It was probably a \$55,000 contract and it was 100% free. They wore their hearts on their sleeves. We had big guys in here. They'd hear the stories of abuse, and they'd just start to cry. They were all in. Every subcontractor we recruited gave something. It was a shared vision on every level."

"Everyone has been so wonderful," Bayson said. "They see what we're trying to do and how it will help the community."

### On the Way

The DVRC opened its doors in June to clients. Among its key features currently



**New space holds collection center for Laura's House retail stores**

available now or are in development include individual, family and children's services rooms, a library and resource room, prevention and education training room, digital advocacy space, client services advocacy offices, legal advocacy offices, experiential healing room, volunteer workspace, a media room, kitchen and lounge, warehouse space and even an outdoor patio.

The whole building is amazing, said Osborn. "My favorite room is the children's

room. It's such a warm and inviting space."

The new and enhanced services the DVRC offers includes programming for anxiety and trauma, increased level of child services including play therapy, and specialized workshops. Yoga, self-defense, cyber safety, wellness and many other initiatives are in development.

"For me," said Bayson, "The best part is being able to provide our services in one location for the families who need it. It's about reducing their stress and anxiety by

having everything they need."

### Join the Journey

The DVRC official grand opening and ribbon-cutting will be on Sept. 30, and will feature a special recognition of the Capital Campaign Donors.

"We're excited about how it came together," Pinnell said. "It's a beautiful building. It has great signage. It's going to be one of those recognizable landmarks in Orange County. It's a place where amazing things will be accomplished."

As of now, the Power of the Journey campaign has amassed \$6 million of its \$10 million goal. The investment will pay off the mortgage on 33 Journey, provide a three-year operating cushion, and create a safe, easily accessible space for survivors of domestic abuse. Laura's House is also seeking a financial endowment to provide flexibility to maintain its life-saving programs.

There are many opportunities to give available, including naming opportunities for virtually all the rooms in the building as well as a donor recognition wall.

But, Pinnell pointed out, it's not about the naming. "It's about filling the need." ■

## Golden State Foods

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goods, canned goods, dried goods and more. By the end of the day, the team had filled cars with more than 8,500 pounds of food.

"It's so nice to see people give their time," McAnena said. "Making a financial donation is great—and necessary. But it's easy to write a check. When people give their hard-earned time to do things like this, it really shows how special they are."

### Vulnerable Families

While the GSF Foundation was fast-tracking

grants and associates were rolling up their sleeves to load up cars with food, GSF subsidiary **KanPak U.S.** was taking on the challenge in its own way.

"I saw on TV that (farmers) were throwing milk away, and I thought that was crazy," said **Larry McGill**, corporate vice president of GSF and chief executive of KanPak U.S. "I knew that there had to be something that we could do to help."

Because of supply disruption caused by the pandemic, dairy farmers were forced to throw out milk. Refusing to stand by while surplus milk went to waste while people were going hungry, KanPak collaborated with the GSF Foundation, GSF, and its **Centralized Freight**

**Management** subsidiary to innovatively bring shelf-stable milk to market in record time—just about a month. Two-thirds of the first production run was shipped to Second Harvest Food Bank's facility in Irvine.

Food banks have limited freezer capacity for perishable donations, so the surplus bottle initiative was a game-changer. Since it is shelf-stable, the bottles don't need to be stored in a refrigerator.

And since it has a nine-month shelf life, food banks can count on it as a long-lasting resource. **Best in Biz Awards** presented GSF with Gold Award for Most Innovative Company of the Year 2020 for the company's efforts to bring shelf-stable milk to market in

record time.

### Continued Care

GSF Foundation responded quickly when Orange County food banks were struggling under the weight of so much demand. Associates gave money out of their pockets and time out of their day. Much good has been done. But as COVID-19 variants wax and wane, how to solve the problem of food insecurity remains uncertain. One thing is sure: GSF and the GSF Foundation will be there, in whatever way is needed.

"The Foundation can do all this good because of the associates," McAnena said. "They are truly committed to improving local communities." ■

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**Event: September 28, 2021 | Publication Date: May 3, 2021**

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12th Annual



**Event: November 18, 2021 | Publication Date: October 18, 2021**

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