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AWARD RECIPIENTS

'Eco-Warrior' Recognized for Activism

Laguna's James Pribram is the recipient of O'Connor Mortuary's Orange County Heart & Soul Award. A professional surfer and owner of Aloha School of Surfing, Pribram is being honored for his decade of dedication to improving water quality and protecting endangered reefs and wildlife.

Created by O'Connor Mortuary, the award program is designed to recognize an Orange County citizen each month for their dedication to making a difference.

"He's an inspiration for us all to follow our hearts and to use our talents to serve a greater good," said Neil O'Connor, O'Connor Mortuary's president and chief executive.

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James Pribram

Eco Warrior

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A near-fatal staph infection contracted in 1997 by entering the ocean with a small cut was the impetus for Pribram's environmental activism. He has since worked to raise awareness of coastal environmental issues, serving on two city committees.

"Now there are beach clean-ups every month in Laguna. People are doing great things and it was all brought on by the ocean committees," he said.

In 2006 he created the Eco-Warrior project, an environmental preservation initiative focused on improving ocean-water quality, preventing destruction of surf locations and protecting endangered reefs and wildlife. His efforts have taken Pribram to several countries, most recently Louisiana and Mississippi.

Pribram co-founded They Will Surf Again, an organization that supports individuals who have suffered ocean-related spinal injuries. He will also be supporting Project Save Our Surf during International Surfing Day, June 19 and 20, for a 24-hour surf-a-thon.

The Heart & Soul recipient receives an official plaque and a donation to a nonprofit of his choice made in his name.