

CAPISTRANO VALLEY NEWS

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2011

JSerra student honored for community service

BY ROB VARDON
STAFF WRITER

Courtney Avila, a senior at JSerra Catholic High School in San Juan Capistrano, is the May winner of O'Connor Mortuary's monthly Heart & Soul Award for community service.

"Courtney is a true asset to the Orange County community because her compassion not only is genuine but it goes beyond her family and friends," said Neil O'Connor, president and chief executive of O'Connor Mortuary. Avila, 17, has been volunteering since age 10 at Special Camp for Special Kids in San Juan Capistrano, where she works with physically and mentally disabled children. She also plays bingo once a month at Del Obispo Terrace Senior Living in San Juan.

Avila's older brother influenced her philanthropic tendencies through his battle with mitochondrial disease, which she says gave her an appreciation for what she has and taught her not to take anything for granted, according to a



JSerra student Courtney Avila, right, greets Bonnie Harper, a camper at Special Camp for Special Kids in San Juan Capistrano.

news release.

In addition to her volunteer work, Avila started the lacrosse team at her high school and recently traveled to China to participate in a peace ambassadors program, speaking about global leadership before an audience of 500 Chinese students, the news release said.

Avila will receive a Heart & Soul Award plaque, and a donation will be made in her name to Special Camp for Special Kids.