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JSerra student honored for community service

By ROB VARDON
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Story Highlights

Courtney Avila, 17, a senior at JSerra Catholic High School, receives this month's Heart & Soul Award from O'Connor Mortuary. She volunteers with disabled children at Special Camp for Special Kids in San Juan Capistrano and plays bingo with senior citizens at Del Obispo Terrace.

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ARTICLE

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. "If this generation thinks beyond themselves as Courtney does, I am incredibly optimistic for the future."



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

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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 news release.

"I have been teaching for 25 years and you only come across kids like Courtney once in a lifetime," Mike Borowski, Avila's teacher at JSerra, said in a statement. "This young lady is full of life and love and everything a school and a teacher could ever wish to have as a student."

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.

She plans to attend [Texas Christian University](#) in the fall and volunteer at a day-care center for children with Down syndrome.

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

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