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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tustin Nonprofit Founder Warms Hearts,  
Helps Stitch Together Tattered Lives**

**TUSTIN, Calif. – October 19, 2010** – Shortly after she began medical treatments for a severe auto immune disorder, Sandy Berg-Whiley learned that a little warmth can lead to a lot of joy. In 2005, she founded The Joyful Foundation and began providing handmade lap blankets to individuals in times of illness and hardship. What started as a group of friends producing five comforting blankets per month has since grown into a communal endeavor that provided 11,000 blankets last year to sick individuals in Orange County and elsewhere. For her heart-warming vision and unflinching devotion to seeing it through, Berg-Whiley today was announced as the September recipient of the Orange County Heart & Soul Award.

Created by [O'Connor Mortuary](#), based in Laguna Hills, the Heart & Soul Award program is designed to recognize Orange County citizens for their passion for life and their dedication to making a difference, whether they possess a lifetime of endeavors or for a one-time inspirational achievement. One Orange County citizen is presented the award each month.

“Sandy’s longstanding commitment and her public contributions truly exemplify what the Heart & Soul Awards are all about,” said Neil O’Connor, president and CEO of O’Connor Mortuary. “Since it’s the fabric of a community that holds us together as a society, it seems poetic that Sandy’s use of needle and thread would illustrate her kindness and compassion.”

The Joyful Foundation is comprised entirely of volunteers, and 100 percent of all donations go directly to the purchase of supplies. The organization currently provides blankets to 24 cancer centers in Orange County, in addition to requests from children’s camps and charities. The demand is high, but the rewards are even greater, often arriving in the form of letters and tearful hugs. The board of directors has recently determined that they are not in the blanket business; they’re in the relationship business.

“It’s not easy to give of yourself. We’re all busy, we’re all on a budget,” said Berg-Whiley. “But the personal rewards greatly outweigh the challenges. I can’t stress enough how fulfilling it is to give back to the community.”

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The Joyful Foundation holds seven workshops each month in North Tustin, Newport Beach, Fullerton and Fountain Valley. “You do not need to sew to be a part of what we do. We also need people to cut, package and deliver,” said Berg-Whiley. “If you come, we’ll put you to work.”

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O’Connor Mortuary will present Berg-Whiley, who dedicates more than 80 hours a week to The Joyful Foundation, with an official plaque. O’Connor Mortuary will also make a donation in her name to Mission Hospital.

For more information on The Joyful Foundation, visit [www.joyfulfoundation.org](http://www.joyfulfoundation.org).

### **ABOUT THE HEART & SOUL AWARDS**

Created by O’Connor Mortuary in February 2010, the Heart & Soul Award honors Orange County individuals each month for their exemplary and inspiring roles within the community. In celebrating the human spirit, the award recognizes OC residents for pouring their heart and soul into making a difference, whether for a life filled with dedicated endeavors or for a one-time inspirational achievement. One recipient is honored each month with an award plaque, a one-time donation to a local nonprofit organization in his/her name and recognition at a quarterly award reception. To nominate an outstanding Orange County citizen, email Patricia Kolstad at [patricia@oconnormortuary.com](mailto:patricia@oconnormortuary.com).

### **ABOUT O’CONNOR MORTUARY**

[O’Connor Mortuary](#) is the oldest family owned and operated mortuary in California. With offices in Laguna Hills, San Juan Capistrano and Irvine, Calif., it is the leading “stand alone” mortuary in Orange County. Founded in 1898 by Patrick J. O’Connor, and succeeded by his son Joseph and grandson Joseph Jr., the company today is managed by fourth generation CEO, Neil P. O’Connor and his two brother-in-laws, Joseph Fitzgerald, CFO and Charles Ricciardi, COO; as well as Jeff Turner, CAO. O’Connor Mortuary is recognized throughout Southern California for its longstanding tradition of caring, personalized service, honesty and integrity. The multi-generational company is active in numerous local charitable organizations and was honored by the California Historical Society for more than 100 years of continuous care and service to Southern California families. In addition, the company was honored in 2005 by the Family Owned Business Council for longevity and has received the Leatherby Award for Ethics in America.

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