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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Costa Mesa Boy Forgoes Birthday Presents in
Order to Make Charity Work a 'Pet' Project**

*12-year-old recognized with Heart & Soul Award for
giving up gifts in exchange for animal-shelter donations*

COSTA MESA, Calif. – August 25, 2010 – Summer is the perfect time for a mid-afternoon nap, a peaceful evening snooze in a backyard hammock, a sun-soaked float on an inflatable raft and a lazy day at the beach. But 12-year-old Costa Mesa resident Julian Jackson-Brunning hasn't exactly let his summer go to the dogs – or has he? Jackson-Brunning, who turned his birthday last month into a unique event to benefit Retrievers & Friends of Southern California (RFSC), a full-service Southern California pet rescue, today was announced as the August 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.

“In creating the Heart & Soul program earlier this year, our goal was to highlight the generosity of spirit that Julian embodies, and his selflessness touched all of us involved with this award,” said Neil O'Connor, president and CEO of O'Connor Mortuary. “For someone to give of himself in this way is extremely impressive, but for that sense of purpose to reside in a 12-year-old boy is truly inspiring.”

Jackson-Brunning's fondness for RFSC began when his family adopted Brinkley, a fun-loving golden retriever, from the organization. Knowing that RFSC operates on volunteer efforts and donations from supporters, Jackson-Brunning opted to forgo birthday gifts this year and instead ask that well-wishers give to the animal rescue and not to him.

He posted a video invitation on Youtube to his July 10 birthday party, asking for dog and cat donation items for the shelter in lieu of birthday gifts, and the result was more than the pint-sized philanthropist could have imagined.

Among the items, Jackson-Brunning netted dog food/treats, leashes, cleaning supplies, pet toys, fleece pet blankets/beds, gift cards, cash, and even a large cedar dog house. It was a haul that made it a birthday to remember. Jackson-Brunning and family proudly delivered a van full of goodies for the animals at RFSC on July 21.

“I love Brinkley so much, and I want to help all animals like her find loving homes,” said the Costa Mesa Middle School seventh grader. “I didn’t want any presents for myself this year. I got so many great donations for lots of shelter animals and that made me feel pretty special. Retrievers & Friends gave us the best gift when they adopted Brinkley to us. I just wanted to give a little something back to them.”

After delivering the donations to RFSC, Jackson-Brunning said to his mom, Angela Jackson-Brunning, “That felt so great giving all those items to the rescue. Can we do it again soon?”

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O’Connor Mortuary will present Jackson-Brunning, who has a history of community involvement and helped collect donations for his aunt and cousins when they lost their home and all of their possessions in the 2007 Santiago Canyon fire, with an official plaque. O’Connor Mortuary will also make a donation in Julian’s name to the Trauma Intervention Program – the organization that helped his family recover after the fire.

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.

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.