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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**San Juan Capistrano ‘Everyday Hero’ Honored  
with O’Connor Mortuary Heart & Soul Award**

**LAGUNA HILLS, Calif. – December 21, 2010** – San Juan Capistrano resident Linda Falk has little time for herself these days. She begins each morning at dawn by helping to care for her baby grandson. She takes him to daycare at St. John Episcopal School in Rancho Santa Margarita where she also teaches Spanish to 400 pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students. In the evening, Falk visits with her mother, who is recovering from a stroke, and her father, who is caring for her. Recognized as an “everyday hero” for the influence she has had on thousands of children in Orange County and for living her days from morning to night for others, Falk today was announced as the November recipient of the O’Connor Mortuary Heart & Soul Award.

Created by [O’Connor Mortuary](#), the Heart & Soul Awards 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.

“Linda’s story resounds with all of us at O’Connor Mortuary because she personifies the many everyday heroes in our community who put extraordinary effort into ordinary tasks,” said Neil O’Connor, president and CEO of O’Connor Mortuary. “She represents every hard-working man and woman who generously invests in the future of children, gives selflessly to community and strengthens personal family bonds with warmth and grace.”

Falk has been teaching at St. John Episcopal School for twelve years. However, her experience working with children goes back to her days in college when she assisted local students with traditional Spanish, Mexican and Basque dances at the Mission Parish School of San Juan Capistrano. In 1984, she took over the dance program and continued to teach it for several years as a volunteer.

“I loved teaching dances to the children for the same reasons I love teaching Spanish. It allowed me to open up their world by exposing them to the traditions and customs of more than 20 Spanish-speaking countries,” said Falk. “I believe an appreciation for language and culture promotes tolerance and inspires peace. I feel privileged to play a role in instilling those values in the children because they truly are our future.”

As a ninth-generation San Juan Capistrano native, Falk's passion for Hispanic and early California history and area traditions runs deep – and she shares this love with her students and the community. In the mid-1980s, when the Mission School was suffering financially, Falk orchestrated the first “Mission Serenade,” a gala that directly benefited the school's budget. The event is still held annually and serves as a prime fundraiser for the Mission School. According to Falk, protecting the history of San Juan is of utmost importance, which is why she continues her mission for preservation as a member of the San Juan Historical Society.

“Thinking about all that I am blessed with makes it easy to give back to others,” said Falk. “I know that what I do is not unlike what millions of other teachers do, and I feel very fortunate to influence the lives of so many children. I am honored and humbled to receive this award, and I'm grateful to O'Connor Mortuary for deeming me worthy.”

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O'Connor Mortuary will present Falk with an official plaque, and a donation will be made in her name to Kids Konnected.

#### **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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