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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Laguna Niguel Teen Effecting Change by ‘Being the Change’**

*Philanthropic Endeavors Recognized with O’Connor Mortuary’s Heart & Soul Award*

**LAGUNA NIGUEL, Calif. – March 7, 2011** – A few years ago, Laguna Niguel resident Kaitlyn Waterbury adopted Ghandi’s simple philosophy of “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” At just 18 years old, the Dana Hills High School student has already accomplished remarkable things for her school, her community and even those living in third-world countries, making her the perfect 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.

“I am so pleased to honor Kaitlyn this month. Philanthropy isn’t something she does; it is a part of who she is,” said Neil O’Connor, President and CEO of O’Connor Mortuary. “She has set a wonderful example with her unyielding compassion and fierce campaigns for all the individuals and organizations she helps.”

One of the organizations that best illustrates Waterbury's philanthropic spirit is “Be the Change,” a club she founded her sophomore year of high school. Given budget cuts in education and her own heightened awareness that her school was in desperate need of funds, Waterbury’s club originally aimed to raise enough money to revamp the school gym—a goal recently accomplished with the help of a parent-led nonprofit group. Now, Be the Change is raising money for new computers, and Waterbury has implemented creative fundraising tactics such as coin-collection jars in classrooms and recycling bottles, cans and ink cartridges. She’s even spearheaded an extensive campaign to vie for a chance to win a grant through the [Pepsi Refresh Project](#).

Waterbury’s passion for volunteerism began in sixth grade when she started donating time once a week to the Laguna Hills Hawks, a coed team of Special Olympians from Orange County. Six years later, Waterbury can still be found on the basketball court every Sunday with her team. Also counted among her many years of philanthropy, Waterbury has devoted considerable time to “Art for Healing,” a club that delivers supplies to children in difficult situations, providing them with the opportunity to express themselves through artwork.

Additionally and impressively, in lieu of presents on her eighteenth birthday, Waterbury requested that her friends and relatives donate what they would have spent on gifts to [Charity: Water](#), an organization that raises money to bring clean and safe water to developing countries.

While her initiative and resolute commitment to “Be the Change” and many other worthy organizations are immeasurable, her basic honesty is similarly remarkable. “It’s good to help out other people, and it makes me feel good,” she said. According to Waterbury, her mother, Mila Evanovich, is her biggest inspiration and much of what she has done for the community could not have been accomplished without her mother’s support.

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O’Connor Mortuary will present Waterbury with an official plaque, and a donation will be made in her name to the Be the Change club.

### **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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