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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Laguna Woods Resident Honored for Taking Action,
Educating Seniors About What They *Can* Do**

LAGUNA WOODS, Calif. – June 2, 2011 – Virtually silenced at a young age by a cumbersome speech impediment, Denise Welch has long since accepted her stutter (what the Laguna Woods Village resident now refers to as an ‘accent’) and gone right on talking. Ironically now a “voice” of sorts for seniors as an advocate in her retirement community, Welch has dedicated herself to educating retirees about their capabilities and helping them help themselves. For overcoming personal adversity and inspiring countless others to do the same, Welch has been announced as the June 2011 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.

“Denise is an ardent believer in herself and in others. ‘Can’t’ is not in her vocabulary, and that kind of positivity is infectious,” said Neil O’Connor, President and CEO of O’Connor Mortuary. “She is an inspiration to people of any age, in any stage of life, and so deserving of this award.”

After moving to Laguna Woods Village in 1997, and having been inspired by her father’s commitment to volunteering with Kiwanis, Welch instantly got involved with a number of organizations and clubs, later founding Kiwanis 737. Welch developed programs to facilitate networking in the community, educate people about everything from upcoming events to Medicare intricacies, and inspire people to get involved. She recently organized a golf clinic for the visually impaired—something many people balked at, but she made it a reality for some very grateful golf enthusiasts.

Serving on many boards and volunteering with numerous clubs and community projects, this 68-year-old philanthropist notably started the “Welcome New Residents” program and “Help a Senior Day,” which encourages residents to help each other with simple tasks their neighbors may not be able to accomplish on their own.

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“We all have to be advocates for each other, and I like telling people about what they *can* do.” Welch said. “If there are 10 of us holding hands, we are a lot stronger.”

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O’Connor Mortuary will present Welch with an official plaque, and a donation will be made in her name to Saddleback Kiwanis 737.

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.

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