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**CHAPLAIN PROVIDES SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE TO FIRST RESPONDERS,
RECEIVES O'CONNOR MORTUARY HEART & SOUL AWARD**

MISSION VIEJO, Calif. – Sept. 15, 2011 – They are the face of bravery – first responders such as firemen, police officers and paramedics who selflessly stand in harm's way to serve our community at the onset of a tragedy. Chaplain Jeff Hetschel has dedicated his life's work to providing spiritual guidance and counsel to these valiant men and women to reinforce their heroism and help them through their own personal tragedies.

The Mission Viejo resident is a chaplain to police and fire departments in Irvine, as well numerous departments throughout the county, and serves as a dedicated member of Tactical Chaplain Services, an organization serving first responders and military personnel. In this role, he works with first responders in addition to victims and bystanders affected by the event. For his commitment and service, Hetschel has been honored as the September 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.

"Most of us don't think about the challenges first responders face every day and how emotionally and spiritually demanding these jobs can be," said Neil O'Connor, president and CEO of O'Connor Mortuary. "Jeff's genuine warmth and concern for others is a testament to his character and precisely what the Heart & Soul Award celebrates."

As a trained critical incident counselor, Hetschel works with mental health professionals and peer support officers to bring first responders together soon after an incident to help reduce the possibility of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. According to Warren C. Johnson, Senior Chaplain of the Orange County Fire Authority, Hetschel's contribution to this critical process has been above the call of duty, making himself available and providing an empathetic hand in a time of extreme need to help people build a "new normal."

“The worst day of our lives is when these guys show up,” said Hetschel. “I just want to help those who help us and be there for them because they are always there for us.”

Hetschel is also the past president of the Southern California Chaplain's Association, an organization designed to bring police, fire, jail and hospital chaplains together for quarterly training sessions. Hetschel assists in training chaplains for their numerous responsibilities, including how to minister to first responders without interfering with an investigation and how to handle a catastrophic event such as a school shooting.

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O'Connor Mortuary will present Hetschel with an official plaque, and a donation will be made in his name to the Trauma Intervention Program (TIP).

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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