

The
GOLDEN RULE
THE MAGAZINE OF HOAG'S COMMUNITY BENEFIT INITIATIVES



hoag.

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH
Vital for Mom & Baby

HEALTH EQUITY
Moving Forward

FINANCIAL LITERACY
Tools for Success

Message from the Director



Welcome to the Fall 2023 issue of The Golden Rule, the magazine dedicated to Hoag's Community Benefit Initiatives at the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living (MHSCHL).

This issue focuses on a variety of topics central to our efforts here at the Center: mental health support for new moms, our invaluable partnership with Families Forward, the urgency of rental assistance, and vital community collaborations like the one we share with Newport-Mesa Unified School District and IKEA – just to name a few.

As always, we place a significant focus on mental health. In this issue, we focus on perinatal mental health, issues that occur during pregnancy and the first year following the birth of a child. An area long-overlooked, we've created a perinatal mental health team to help new mothers adjust successfully.

To better serve our diverse community, we've built a bilingual and bicultural team. We profile four women who are well-equipped to meet the unique needs of our community. These women are shining examples of our effort to build a bilingual/bicultural workforce, one that delivers the highest quality of service while addressing health equity issues.

We also highlight a partner to the Center, Families Forward, an organization working to end family homelessness by providing access to housing and resources that create lasting stability. Rental assistance has been a vital offering for the Center, due to the perfect storm of a housing shortage, inflated rental prices, and the economic impact of the pandemic. We see many people at risk of losing their homes and facing eviction. The Center is working to connect struggling individuals and families with resources and referral services that can help.

Our goal at The Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living remains steadfast: to serve our community in the most strategic and effective way possible. And thanks to the generosity of our donors, community partners, and Hoag leadership, we have been able to do just that.

Many thanks for your continued support. With deepest gratitude,

Michael Silva Rose, DrPH, LCSW
Director of Community Health and Community Benefit

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January - August 2023

Perinatal Mental Health

Vital for Mother and Baby

No longer dismissed as “just the baby blues,” perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADS) are common. One in five women experience clinically significant mood and/or anxiety symptoms during or after pregnancy, making it the number one health complication associated with giving birth.

PMADS are the distressing feelings and mental health complications that can occur during pregnancy or soon after giving birth.

Potentially serious and complex, support for PMADS is vital in order to promote healthy maternal and family bonds, and to give babies the best possible start in life. Hoag’s Mental Health Center is privileged to have two bilingual Certified Perinatal Mental Health Clinicians - Marisa Arpels, ACSW and Miriam Bustamante, LCSW. These two specialized and passionate clinicians dedicate their

efforts to helping under-resourced parents in the community cope with the challenges of bringing home a baby.

Both Marisa and Miriam note that in addition to the changes and issues that all new moms face, “Our clients have additional stressors related to severe financial instability: discrimination, lack of access to quality care, and language barriers.” They also note that many mothers do not get paid leave from their jobs and cannot afford childcare, so they are forced into greater poverty due to impossible

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choices about whether to work or stay at home with the baby. Many do not have the support of family nearby or are scared to ask for help. They face food and housing insecurity, on top of the already stressful job of parenting children.

Marisa and Miriam share, “We are so grateful that our Mental Health Center exists to fill in the gap for those parents who may not otherwise be able to access mental health resources.” MHSCHL also offers bi-weekly food distribution and a monthly diaper distribution for our families, an especially welcomed service. And once they feel ready, new moms can benefit from participating in the Center’s free fitness classes, where free childcare is provided during the class. “Healthy Steps,” a stroller walking group, helps establish a sense of community for new moms to connect.

One of the biggest challenges Miriam sees new parents face is the change in relationship dynamics after bringing the baby home. She points out that, “When a baby is born, two parents are also born and it can be difficult to continue to prioritize the relationship

after becoming a parent.” To help smooth the transition, Miriam teaches a workshop for new and expecting parents called “The Fourth Trimester.”

Both Marisa and Miriam have counseling backgrounds with master’s degrees in social work. Both interned at Hoag’s Mental Health Center during graduate school. Both are moms, themselves, and of course, both claim that babies are the most fun part of the job. Miriam notes, “Not only are they cute, but for me, seeing a happy healthy parent providing a secure attachment for their babies is everything.”

Reflecting on the positive impact their work can have, Marisa and Miriam say, “It’s really prevention at its finest...creating an environment that can minimize the risk for potential mental health challenges and really begin to break the cycle of generational trauma for their children.”

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“ We are so grateful that our Mental Health Center exists to fill in the gap for those parents who may not otherwise be able to access mental health resources. ”

”

Five Questions With The Experts

1. What is the protocol for screening for Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADS)?

MARISA: “Assessment is key. Postpartum Support International recommends screening at the first prenatal visit and at least once in the second and third trimester as well as at the six-week postpartum visit. During the postpartum period, PSI also recommends screening at the 3-month, 9-month, and 12-month pediatric visits. Healthcare professionals who come in contact with mom and/or baby assess for PMADS, and then link moms to mental health care professionals who can help.”

2. What is a surprising statistic?

MIRIAM: “That men suffer, too. One in ten new dads also experience mood and/or anxiety symptoms due to the added financial burden, the struggle to bond, the change in relationship. Yet many parents stay silent because of stigma and associated feelings of shame. More awareness surrounding the prevalence of PMADS is key to reducing stigma.”

3. What motivated you to become certified in this field?

MARISA: “With my first child, I struggled with postpartum depression. I didn’t have the birth I expected; I had no breastmilk. It made me feel like I was broken and a bad mother. Thankfully I had a lot of tools and support to help me through that time and was able to recover quickly. Later, at Hoag, I started seeing clients and saw how common it was for women to say they started to feel depressed or anxious after a pregnancy. When I heard about the certificate, I knew I wanted to get certified.”

MIRIAM: “I always say I got lucky because I happened to be interning at the Hoag Mental

Health Center when I was hired to focus on maternal mental health. I became a mother in 2020 during the pandemic and despite having all the knowledge about perinatal mental health, I still struggled. I was fortunate because I knew exactly what to do and I wasn’t afraid to speak up about how I was feeling. That experience really increased my passion and dedication for this work and that’s what motivated me to become certified.”

4. What are some examples of pregnancy/postpartum-related complex mental health needs that some women face?

MARISA: “One common issue is postpartum anxiety, where the new mother experiences intrusive thoughts, thoughts in which she might harm the baby. This is treatable with psychotherapy. Postpartum psychosis, characterized by hallucinations and delusions, is very serious but less common (about 1-2/1000 births) and requires immediate intervention. Birth trauma, problems with delivery, and unexpected admission to the NICU are also difficult experiences that are more common than expected, but they can result in perinatal PTSD, and represent a sense of loss, as well.”

5. Do you have advice you like to give new moms?

MARISA: “Being a mom is BOTH wonderful and difficult. Make time for yourself. Caring for mom is caring for baby. There is no perfect parent. Ask for help. Share your story.”

MIRIAM: “I remind new moms that this season in their life is not for giving, it is for receiving. They are already giving so much of themselves to their babies.”



MELINDA HOAG SMITH

CENTURY LIVING

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Moving Families Forward

Two farmhouses and a handful of rented apartments. Back in 1984, these were the humble beginnings of Families Forward, a grassroots effort to house families with children experiencing homelessness. Since then, Families Forward has grown into one of Orange County’s most impactful nonprofits, having improved the lives of more than a quarter of a million people.

HOUSING FAMILIES IN NEED

Families Forward is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Orange County families with minor-aged children who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Oftentimes, this homelessness is due to a crisis or emergency such as a death in the family, the loss of a job, an illness, domestic abuse, or a divorce – situations that can be devastating both emotionally and financially. Compounding the problem is the lack of affordable rental housing in Orange County.

For the invisible homeless – families who are couch-surfing, living out of their car, and those with no safety net – Families Forward is ready to assist with an array of services, from medical resources to mental health care to career counseling to utility assistance. In addition to providing shelter, Families Forward also operates a walk-up food-pantry which assists 200 families weekly.

THE URGENCY

According to Families Forward, 28,000 Orange County children are homeless, going to sleep each night in their cars, or moving from place to place to seek shelter with their families. This instability is especially hard on children, impacting their ability to

consistently attend school and acquire a solid education, as well as endangering that crucial sense of physical and mental well-being needed to grow into a healthy adult. CEO Madelynn Herneise cites the importance of “breaking the trauma cycle to reduce adverse childhood experiences by providing a safe, stable place” for children to be able to thrive. Almost 70% of the families they serve are single, female head-of-household, but it is notable that families come from all 34 cities in Orange County, not just one area.

A PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living and Families Forward is based on an efficient and direct referral process from the Center to Families Forward — seamlessly helping families in need of rental assistance and housing stabilization services. According to Madelynn, this direct connection is an invaluable resource for the local families we serve, providing them with a “one-stop” shop of necessary community support. Having service providers under one roof that are championed and supported through Hoag creates increased synergy and collaboration, which only improves outcomes for our families in need.

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Profile: Madelynn Hirneise

Madelynn Hirneise has spent the last decade dedicated to the mission of Families Forward — to prevent and end family homelessness. In her time there, she has served as both a housing resource specialist as well as senior director of the organization, before stepping into the role of CEO in 2019.

Armed with a degree in International Studies with a focus on Human Rights from UCI, Madelynn began her career with the Peace Corps in Guatemala. When she returned home to Orange County, her values, as well as the skills she had developed, were a perfect fit for Families Forward.

Madelynn’s philosophy is that “If we can end the generational trauma of homelessness and poverty through housing and education, then we can change the trajectory of a child’s life forever.” And the issue is urgent. “The need for our services has been rapidly increasing for years,” says Madelynn. “But the number of families experiencing homelessness and seeking services has risen to record levels, with calls for housing assistance up 59% from this time last year.”

With the generous support of the community partners and funders like Hoag, Families Forward has successfully prevented or ended homelessness for 679 families (2,354 children and their parents) and provided services to over 12,045 individuals last year. In addition, Families Forward provided 30,525 meals to Orange County residents through their food pantry.

Madelynn sees firsthand how the pandemic caused so much hardship and that many OC families have not yet fully recovered. “Come October,” she explains, “there will be a dramatic loss in pandemic supplemental funding from the federal government to support Orange County families experiencing homelessness. The real crisis is now — organizations like Families Forward critically need funding to sustain services and keep families safely housed.”

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Financial Literacy

Tools for Success

SparkPoint OC, a program of The Orange County United Way, is working to make financial stability a reality for low-income residents of Orange County. SparkPoint's mission is to give OC residents the tools they need to create financial stability through education, classes, and one-on-one financial coaching. And The Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living counts on SparkPoint OC as a vital partner.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

With the help of one-on-one financial coaching, attainable goal-setting plans are created in three key areas: ways to increase income, managing credit, and building assets. Practical services supporting these goals include free tax prep, job training and placement, creating sustainable household budgets, and creating savings goals toward home-buying or paying for college.

County locations: five at elementary school sites and now at The Center, as well. Plans to open a SparkPoint site at The Center began in December 2022 and the program was launched in April 2023. Workshops are offered in both English and Spanish. This financial coaching program is offered at no cost.

AN EDUCATION

The information and education is provided by both expert staff and compassionate volunteers. Specialists in finance, education, and social work lead the team, with caring individuals also lending a hand. Classes are held at six Orange

Working in partnership with local agencies to address the county's most pressing needs is the goal of the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living. "Our collaboration with SparkPoint OC is helping us to bring the community one step closer to the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty and attain financial stability" says Michael Rose, Director, "helping clients move from surviving to thriving."

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Profile: Nancy Deleon

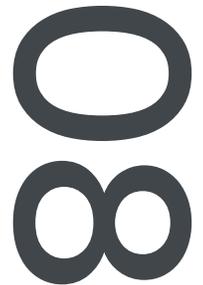
The role of the SparkPoint OC Financial Case Manager is to provide one-on-one coaching, support, education, and guidance on identifying a client’s financial goals — working with them for 12 months in the areas of increasing income, reducing debt, improving credit, building assets, and the basics of money management.

Case Manager Nancy DeLeon spearheads this vital program. Nancy brings an invaluable personal perspective to her role at SparkPoint, sharing that as a child, she recalls “being the only English speaker in my family and having to be my mom’s advocate at a very young age. As a little girl, I learned how to navigate complicated financial systems in an unfamiliar country with a foreign language, and as a result, my passion for advocating for family, friends, and our community grew.”

She successfully used her early experiences to guide her career path and mission to help others. Nancy has nine years of experience as a Case Manager in the field of financial stability and is very knowledgeable about issues affecting low-to-moderate-income individuals and families. Nancy shares one strategy to help clients, saying “We constantly contact clients to ensure we build genuine connections and to give them the support needed so that clients are on track to increase income, reduce debt, increase savings, and improve credit scores.”



On a personal note, Nancy says, “I am passionate about my work because it is close to my heart.” Nancy feels tremendous satisfaction from her work, saying that “SparkPoint offers a strong foundation for financial literacy” and knowing that she is helping to change the lives of MHSCHL clients.





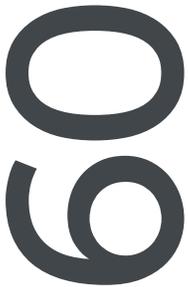
Hoag And The Community Come Together

The 2023 Back to School Resource Fair was a huge success. Hosted by Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) in partnership with the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living and IKEA, the resource fair provided a great head start to the school year. The event, which benefits our low-income and under-resourced families in the district, was held on Saturday, August 19th in Costa Mesa.

We had 81 partner agencies sharing an array of resources and goodies with our families: basic necessities for the school year such as free backpacks and school supplies, shoes, socks, and bicycle helmets. Through our partner agencies we were also able to provide haircuts, bus passes, boxes of food, and even health and dental check ups.

in attendance in 2022. The increase in participation really speaks to the needs of the community. Thanks to our lead partners NMUSD and IKEA, the 2023 Resource Fair helped meet some crucial needs for local students and their families to help them have a successful school year.

Over 4,300 people were in attendance this year including 2,015 NMUSD students. This was a significant increase from 3,000 people





NMUSD Back to School Resource Fair – Collaborating Partners

America On Track
 Assistance League
 Big Brothers Big Sisters OC
 Boys & Girls Clubs of
 Central Coast
 Boys & Girls Clubs of
 Garden Grove
 Bracken's Kitchen
 CalAssist
 California State Assembly,
 District 73, Asm. Cottie
 Petrie-Norris
 CalOptima Health
 CASA OC
 Casa Youth Shelter
 CHOC - PODER
 CHOC - Wellness on Wheels
 City of Costa Mesa
 Clinic in the Park/AAP-OC
 Community Action
 Partnership of OC
 Community Health Initiative
 of Orange County
 Community Legal Aid SoCal
 Costa Mesa Fire Department
 Costa Mesa Police
 Department
 County of Orange Health
 Care Agency: OC Local
 Oral Health Programs
 County of Orange Social
 Services Agency
 Dr. Patricia's Health Club
 Dreams for Schools -
 Karina's Backpacks
 Epilepsy Support Network
 Fair Housing Foundation
 Families Forward

Families Together of
 Orange County
 Fit First
 Girls Inc
 Hoag
 Hope Harbor
 Human Options
 Huntington Beach
 Adult School
 IKEA
 Kids Can Cosplay
 Latino Health Access
 Let's Be Kind
 LGBTQ Center OC
 MOMS Orange County
 Newport Mesa Family
 Resource Center
 Newport Mesa Unified
 School District
 NMUSD - Early Childhood
 Education
 NMUSD - Expanded Learning
 OC Community Liaison
 OC Public Libraries
 Office of Orange County
 Supervisor Katrina Foley
 Olive Crest: Strong Families
 Orange Coast College Adult
 Education Office
 Orange County Communities
 Organize For Responsible
 Development
 Orange County Head Start,
 Inc
 Orange County
 Rescue Mission
 Orange County SC

Orange County
 Transportation Authority
 (OCTA)
 Orange County United Way
 Partners4wellness
 Paul Mitchell Costa Mesa
 Pediatric Exercise and
 Genomics Research
 Center (PERC)
 Planned Parenthood
 Power of One Foundation
 Pretend City Children's
 Museum
 Project Hope Alliance
 Project Youth Orange County
 Bar Foundation
 Radiant Health Centers
 Regional Center of
 Orange County
 Save Our Youth (SOY)
 School on Wheels, Inc
 Serving People in Need
 (SPIN)
 Shanti Orange County
 Share Our Selves (SOS)
 StandUp for Kids
 The H4H Foundation
 The Priority Center - School
 Readiness Program
 Think Together
 Turning Point Center
 for Families
 UCI Health Regional
 Burn Center
 Waymakers
 Waymakers Huntington
 Beach Youth Shelter
 YMCA of Orange County

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Health Equity

Being sick is part of life. But imagine also being scared, not being able to effectively communicate in English, or even know how to ask for help. That's the frightening reality for approximately one million Orange County residents — a sobering statistic that underscores the need for a bilingual, bicultural workforce to help address issues of health inequity.

Fortunately, that need has been turned into a reality at the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living, leading the way by building a vital bilingual, bicultural workforce. The Center is committed to solving issues of health inequity in the local community and is actively leading by example.



“We recognized the need for this service and we addressed it,” says Dr. Michael Rose, Director of the Center. “The causes of health inequity include economic factors such as a lack of insurance and low wages. Other barriers are cultural. In the local Orange County community, health equity issues are exacerbated by language barriers, legal status, and high depression rates — all major factors that keep residents oppressed and disadvantaged. A bilingual/bicultural workforce is optimally positioned to meet the needs of the Center’s clients.”

BUILDING FROM WITHIN

At the core of the bilingual/bicultural team are four Hispanic women on the Center staff who have recently graduated with Masters degrees in Social Work: Dulce Arias Jackson, ASW, Mental Health Therapist; Elvia Escamilla, MSW, Care Manager services; Jessica Sanchez, MSW, Care Manager; and Rosalba Lezo, MSW, Care Manager

To help build a bilingual, bicultural workforce from within, the Center has supported and accommodated existing staff in their graduate school goals. Dulce Arias Jackson says, “Thanks to the financial help of Hoag Foundation’s scholarship and Hoag’s Employee Education

Scholarship Program, I was able to complete my three-year MSW graduate program while still contributing positively to my community during a pandemic.” Jessica Sanchez is grateful that, “MHSCHL made it possible for me to maintain a healthy work-life balance by providing the flexibility to transition to part-time status and accommodated my schedule around my internship experiences.”

A HISTORY OF BRIDGE-BUILDING

The Center boasts a solid history of bicultural bridge-building which only grew stronger with the creation of the Promotor program (or Community Health Worker). The Promotores are bilingual, bicultural liaisons who serve as the outreach team for the center. Their primary goal is to address the needs of the marginalized community. Rosalba Lezo initially joined the staff as one of the Center’s first promotora in 2018. Now the lead Promotora at the Center, her primary goal is to conduct intentional outreach that targets those individuals who are uninsured and often face daily challenges in the communities they live. She also proudly notes that, “Hoag’s Mental Health Center has a bicultural/ bilingual team that offers no-cost professional psychotherapy services in English, Farsi, and Spanish for those individuals who cannot afford services nor have access to services.”

Through multiple innovative approaches to building a bilingual, bicultural workforce from within, the Center is leading the way toward addressing the issues of health inequity in the vulnerable underserved community.

Dulce Arias Jackson

ASW, Mental Health Therapist

“My bicultural life-experience, rooted in immigrating to the United States as a minor, has profoundly shaped my determination to aid others within the community. My own journey, background, and new role as a social worker pushes me to contribute a sense of empathy, understanding, and empowerment within our diverse community.” Dulce appreciates how MHSCHL supported her with a flexible work schedule to balance work and study demands.



Elvia Escamilla

MSW, Care Manager, Supports Psychiatry Services

Elvia shares, “My family and I joke that I was a social worker in training since elementary school, often helping other families navigate resources when translators weren’t available.” In her work, Elvia is genuinely empathetic to the challenges that her clients face. “As an immigrant Latina woman, I know first-hand, the challenges and barriers that exist when attempting to access services.”



Jessica Sanchez

MSW, Care Manager

Growing up in a low-socioeconomic status household, with a monolingual Spanish speaking single-parent, Jessica can empathize with the individuals and families she serves. She is grateful for the “constant comfort, encouragement and empowerment from everyone at MHSCHL to pursue my Masters degree and accomplish my dream to become a social worker.”



Rosalba Lezo

MSW, Care Manager

Rosalba is grateful for the management team at MHSCHL and how they provided flexible work arrangements, easing the burden of pursuing graduate studies while working part-time. “This support has been a game-changer in my life by allowing me to balance my academic commitments and work responsibilities effectively.”



The End of a Chapter

Launched as a visionary approach to healthcare, the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living has changed the lives of countless individuals and families in Orange County by providing a multitude of free health-promoting services under one roof. And at the helm since the Center's doors opened has been Dr. Michael Rose, Director of Community Health, the person who turned the idea of the Center into a reality.



Michael joined Hoag in 1998. She became the first social worker with a focus outside of the hospital, addressing the mental health needs of the surrounding community, providing free psychotherapy services, and psychoeducational groups. Client demand grew quickly and a bigger space was soon needed.

The initial idea for the Center came about during an impromptu hallway meeting among the clinicians at the Mental Health Center – the idea of a one-stop shop to address the multitude of factors which directly affect health. With a generous financial contribution from the Hoag Family Foundation, the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living opened its doors in 2016. As a trusted leader in the field, Dr. Michael Rose successfully created a culturally sensitive model to address the health inequities of the low income and vulnerable populations.

But all good things come to an end and Dr. Michael Rose is moving on to an exciting new chapter in her life. The good news is that she is leaving behind a flourishing Center that will continue her vision.

Michael leaves the Center and its programs as her legacy. She leaves behind an exceptional team who thrived under her leadership. A dedicated team that's passionate about promoting health equity and delivering exceptional services to improving health outcomes for the underserved and vulnerable community.

Wishing you all the best,
Dr. Rose.



(l-r Rocio Valencia-Vega, Michaell Rose, Melinda Hoag Smith, Minzah Malik)

“

Michaell has been a blessing to Hoag and the Center for Healthy Living for 25 years. Her passion for caring for all people and her innovative style of leadership has guided the Center since its inception. Michaell leaves a lasting legacy of expanded services and a loving center for our most vulnerable neighbors.

Her vision of inviting a wide variety of non-profit service agencies to be located at the Center is a model that other healthcare providers want to duplicate in their communities.

I am so grateful and thankful for what Michaell has given and accomplished at the Center. As she leaves, I am sending lots of love and appreciation for her extraordinary commitment to the Center and the community.

— Melinda Hoag Smith

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The Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living — JANUARY - AUGUST 2023 —

All services are provided at no cost



5,161

Individuals Received Food Assistance



\$82,174

Emergency Housing Assistance



248

Individuals Served By Community Nurse Navigators



332

Provided professional development training to nonprofit partners



659

Participants in Health Education Workshops



2,744

Mental Health Therapy Sessions



1,678

Participants in Mental Health Community Workshops and Groups



5,687

Participation in Wellness Classes



128,675

Diapers Distributed



4,136

Participation in Case Management and Resource Brokering

Some of our in house partners provided:



190

Participants in English as a Second Language Classes (Council on Aging & HB Adult Education)



\$401,615

Saved and returned in the form of tax refund – United Way OC Free Tax Prep



9,275

Appointments at the SOS Children & Family Health Center



1,633

Participants in After School Activities for Children (Girls Inc. of OC)



\$25,000

Scholarships provided to Single Parents who are working on a College Degree (Project Self Sufficiency)