



2017 OCRE Luncheon - Sergeant Rachel Bartlett, USMC Reserves

The 4th Annual Orange County Real Estate Luncheon: In Service To Our Veterans

On April 18, 2019, top real estate companies and financial institutions will come together for the 4th Annual Orange County Real Estate Luncheon in partnership with the Orange County Community Foundation. On the surface, it will seem like any other Orange County event—a large ballroom at the Hotel Irvine, handshaking, lunch, and a few speeches. But, if the past three luncheons are any indicator, it won't be long before you realize that this event is different. It's personal and for a cause that matters to all of us.

Featuring General H.R. McMaster, the 26th National Security Advisor, as its keynote speaker, the luncheon hosts a who's who in commercial real estate. They have come together with a shared mission to help the nearly 130,000 veterans currently living in Orange County transition from the military to civilian life, along with another 6,500 veterans who will come to the county from all branches of the service each year.

By any measure, the luncheon has been a resounding success. In just three short years, over \$2.3 million has been granted to exemplary nonprofits serving Orange County veterans. In total, over 15,000 veterans and their families have received services through the 15 organizations funded through the Orange County Veterans Initiative ("OCVI"). Spearheaded by the Orange County Community Foundation, this initiative seeks to align philanthropic resources with organizations that will benefit the health, education, and employment of veterans and their families in Orange County.

Of course, in human terms, it means one less family will sleep in their car, miss their rent, or become torn apart from substance abuse. It means veterans are now finding the critical training that will help them secure employment and housing, while also addressing many physical and mental health issues. Most importantly, it means veterans are getting their feet back on the ground and discovering, once again, what it means to be a valued and meaningful part of their community.

And you'd be right to believe that these are all part of our American contract—what one might expect for having served your country. Stark realities paint a different picture. Today's veteran is becoming increasingly left behind; some might say invisible, which brings us right back to the 4th Annual Orange County Real Estate Luncheon.

"Our involvement with the veterans comes from out of the headlines," said Pat Donahue, Chairman and CEO of Donahue Schriber. "As a group of people, we were shocked at some of the things that were going on with our nation's warriors when they came home. And in our own backyard. Quite frankly, it was unacceptable. Donahue Schriber and our friends in the industry wanted to do something about it."

The headlines Donahue speaks of are unmistakably reinforced with the sobering statistics post-9/11 veterans are currently facing:

- 28 percent of veterans are unemployed
- Of the veterans who work full-time (50 percent), 35 percent have jobs at or below the poverty level
- 35 percent did not have a permanent place to live when they left the military
- 17.5 percent reported a lack of consistent housing during the past two years
- 44 percent screened positive for PTSD
- 46 percent screened positive for depression
- 19 percent considered attempting suicide
- Almost 60 percent of post 9/11 veterans who screened positive for a mental health problem did not seek help

Veteran advocacy groups will tell you these statistics are just the tip of the iceberg. And while the facts are undoubtedly hard to swallow, members of the Orange County real estate industry thought it was critical to stare them straight in the eye. "We, in the real estate community in Orange County have been very fortunate, and our families have been fortunate," Donahue said. "So, we asked ourselves, what could we do to treat our veterans with the respect and dignity that they deserve; how could we become a part of the solution?"

The solution for the organizers of the event was to partner with Orange County Community Foundation ("OCCF") to put on an annual luncheon that would not only bring awareness to the many challenges returning service members face but support local organizations who offer immediate and practical help to veterans.

"Through our Veterans Initiative, we collaborate with high-performing, veteran-focused organizations in Orange County that work to improve outcomes for local veterans and their families," said Shelley Hoss, OCCF's President. "Our goal is to help these nonprofit, veteran-serving organizations build their capacity, serve a broader audience, and address the varying needs of local veterans and their families through a coordinated, collaborative approach. We need to make it easier for veterans to know how and where they can get help."



2018 OCRE Luncheon - Back Row from Left to Right: Larry Casey, Donahue Schriber, Brent Theobald, Vanguard University, Allen Staff, Bank of America, William Wagasy, Commonwealth Land Title, Jake Wood, Team Rubicon, Paul Cate, Mark IV Capital. Front Row from Left to Right: David Zamudio, KBS, Carol Ferguson, OCCF, Shelley Hoss, Kevin Jennings, Bank of America, Pat Donahue, Donahue Schriber

For Donahue and his colleagues in the Orange County real estate industry, the responsibility to help our veterans is one we should all share. "Most people would agree that there is nothing more patriotic than a man or woman in a military uniform—the symbol of selfless sacrifice protecting our country," said Donahue. "But, what happens when that same soldier takes off his or her uniform for the last time? How are they treated then? We think it's a question that we must all ask."

Fortunately, at the 4th Annual Orange County Real Estate Luncheon, they'll be asking that same question. Better yet, if history repeats itself, they'll be answering it with the collective contributions of a community who wants to do right by those who have served our nation.

The 4th Annual Orange County Real Estate Luncheon will be held on April 18, 2019, to raise critical funds for nonprofits focused on services for veterans in Orange County.

Visit www.oc-cf.org/ocrel to become a 2019 sponsor, purchase tickets, or make a donation.

The Orange County Real Estate Luncheon is a private sector effort to make a marked difference to the veterans' experience in Orange County. The proceeds from the luncheon are distributed through the OCCF's OCVI to Orange County veterans' organizations. Founding sponsors include Donahue Schriber, Bank of America, CBRE, Craig Realty Group, Mark IV Capital, Lyon Living, KBS Realty, Rancho Mission Viejo, and Fidelity National Title.