

SEASON OF CARING

A home for hope when there is none

Orange County Rescue Mission shelters those who are battered by life's travails.

By DEEPA BHARATH
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

ORANGE • Shaquisha Bockery was 5 years old when she came to California from Indiana to live with an aunt.

For the last five years, Bockery, now 19, has been bumped around from foster home to group home.

But over the past year, the young mom has finally found a home and, she believes, hope.

Hope. That's the buzzword at the Orange County Rescue Mission, which operates the shelter that Bockery shares with several women and children.

The organization, one of 23 that make up The Orange County Register's Season of Caring campaign, helps many people with situations similar to Bockery's, said Executive Director Jim Palmer.

As part of Season of Caring, the Register will match reader donations through today.

Much like Bockery and other beneficiaries, the nonprofit organization has come a long way, Palmer said.

"Fifteen years ago, we were one building in Santa Ana housing nine homeless men," he said.

The organization was \$90,000 in the red.

Today, the Rescue Mission operates 12 facilities county-wide serving 22,000 people a year, has an operating budget of \$19 million and receives help from about 9,000 volunteers.

The organization owes its success to a shift in focus from serving alcoholic men to helping women and children, who constitute 70 percent of Orange County's homeless

population, Palmer said.

Another important secret to their success is that they don't borrow money, he said.

"We practice what we preach," he said. "We tell our clients not to use credit cards irresponsibly. We only build with money that we already have."

That ensures that a majority of the donated money goes to the various causes and not to paying overheads and interest on loans, Palmer explained.

The rehabilitation programs offered by the Rescue Mission have changed her life, said Kaisie Strawn, 20.

"First of all, it's changed my attitude," she said. "I'm not this crazy party person any more. I've learned to make plans for my life and set goals."

Strawn, who has lived in one of the organization's shelters for the last eight months, says it's the longest time she has ever lived in one place.

"This has taught me that stability is a good thing and

How to donate to Season of Caring

- Contribute by sending in the coupon, calling 714-796-2280 or donating at www.ocregister.com/seasonofcaring.

- 100 percent of contributions will be distributed among 23 charities that assist the hungry, homeless and disadvantaged in Orange County.

- The Orange County Register and the Orange County Community Foundation will make a substantial gift toward matching donations from the community.

- All administrative costs are underwritten by the Register. Thank you for your support.



MARK RIGHTMIRE, THE REGISTER

NEW LIFE: Shaquisha Bockery, 19, and her son Amaar, 10 months, stay at the Orange County Rescue Mission.

churches that supply volunteers and various services to the shelters, he said.

Bockery said her relationship with God has become stronger since she got to the shelter.

On a recent morning she sat on a couch at the shelter, cradling her 10-month-old son, Amaar.

"I've been blessed with a son," she said. "When he cries for me, it makes me feel really good. I've never been loved or wanted before."

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Yes, I want to contribute to the Season of Caring

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