

O.C. Rescue Mission Helps Homeless Children With Distance Learning, Homeless Adults



Pictured (center) is Orange County Rescue Mission “Village of Hope” teacher Katie Philipson with students, Madyson (left) and Dana (right). The nonprofit has made it a part of their goal to help homeless children with distance learning during the coronavirus pandemic.

During the pandemic, the Orange County Rescue Mission not only helps homeless parents get on their feet, but also their children through distance learning assistance.

“Homeless children have already suffered many challenges and setbacks in their education,” said Senior Marketing Manager Kristi Nichols. “Our goal is to make sure distance learning is not another setback for them.”

As an “essential provider” during COVID-19 that has been around since 1965, the Orange County Rescue Mission (OCRM) main goal has been to remain open throughout the entire pandemic, according to Nichols.

In order to accommodate distance learning, the OCRM took several measures by increasing Wi-Fi capacity, purchasing equipment and furnishings, renovating rooms to be more conducive as a school setting, and hiring a teacher and two teaching assistants to help the kids, said Nichols.

With extensive changes their protocols and the purchase of PPE for all residents and employees, the OCRM is still allowing new individuals, families, and children to enter their program.

“This week, we are serving 214 people,” said Nichols. “The numbers fluctuate week-to-week with people transitioning in and out.”

“This number is no greater than normal for the OCRM, and the pandemic has not greatly affected the unsheltered homeless community throughout the county,” she added. “It is not a stronger motivation for them to come to a program to change their lives.”

But that is exactly what the rescue mission offers. The nonprofit and their affiliate organizations help the homeless population with opportunities to change their lives.

They employ a full-time outreach worker, with outreach resourced through short-term programs and the county jails from where individuals are referred. Currently outreach is active in Santa Ana and Costa Mesa, but they go wherever the homeless congregate in Orange County. In a 2019 report, individuals served were representative of every city in the county except one, according to Nichols.

The rescue mission began as a small organization in Santa Ana and has grown into one with 15 campuses, with three affiliated organizations which provide comprehensive and long-term services that get to the root causes of homelessness.

“We work to empower individuals and families towards self-sufficiency,” she said. “It is our mission to minister the love of Jesus Christ to the least, the last and the lost in our community through the provision of assistance in the areas of guidance, counseling, education, job training, shelter, food, clothing, health care and independent living communities.”

The Orange County Rescue Mission is completely funded privately through individuals, corporations, foundations and churches. For more information, please visit online at www.rescuemission.org.