



## Homelessness: Objects in mirror are closer than they appear

Chapman University Dodge College of Film and Media Arts student, Margot Czeropski, recently produced and directed a piece on the irony of homelessness in Orange County.

This humbling yet insightful documentary featured a discussion from Build Futures Executive Director, Kathy Tillotson, on the unlikely and a-typical demographics of the homeless in Orange County.

People think that homelessness doesn't exist in Orange County when in fact, it's much like the message on your review mirror, "objects in mirror may be closer than they appear."

The unexpected truth about homelessness is that the face of this solemn situation looks more like everyday people than we know.

It's families, college students, working parents; people you see everyday, people who look just like you!

They don't fit our stereotypical mind-set of homelessness and more often than not, blend into our parameters of acceptability and go unnoticed.

We are all too familiar with the OC stereotype shown in shows like *The Real Housewives of Orange County*. But what about the stories and lives of the un-stereotypical Orange County residents? No, their lifestyles aren't as sexy, nor do we long to be in their shoes, but their stories are just as important, just as worthy, and just as vital to the imagery of the OC.

To watch an inspiring account of homelessness in the OC, [click here](#).

## Volunteer Spotlight: Databasing the Data

In a recent interview with Build Futures volunteer, Bonnie Shea, Bonnie revealed her passion for Build Futures and how she hopes to make a difference in the lives of homeless youth.

### Q. How did you learn about Build Futures?

A. I heard about the organization from my friend, Ellen Dellis. She has been working with Kathy doing grant writing and helping coordinate volunteers.

### Q. How long have you been involved with the organization?

A. I first contacted Kathy in October 2011, so that would make it 8 months

See Data, page 2.

## Q. In what capacity have you been volunteering with the organization?

A. When I first met with Kathy, she explained that she had identified critical milestones that would help young people become successful. Her mission for Build Futures is to provide resources to help homeless youth reach these milestones. As she described her processes, I noticed she was using spreadsheets and Microsoft Word documents to keep track of much of the information that would

help both her and the young people find resources as well as tracking their progress toward achieving these milestones.

It's quite a feat to keep ever-changing information up-to-date when you're using spreadsheets and Word documents. Since my professional background is in developing applications to manage data, I thought my skills could best be put to use developing a system to help easily manage that information. ( Bonnie is a partner at Pixelloom,LLC, a full service web design firm in Irvine. )

The first step was to develop a web-based system for maintaining information about resources available to assist the homeless in Orange County. Because the information is stored in a SQL database, it can easily be searched and displayed via the web - including electronic devices such as smart phones. Having this information available anywhere makes it easy for case managers to quickly find the information they're looking for to assist those in need.

(To view the resource database, [click here.](#))

## Q. What inspired you to volunteer with Build Futures?

A. Kathy's devotion to helping the homeless youth of Orange County is truly inspiring. She tirelessly advocates for these young people and hopefully, by lending my skills to the effort, she will be able to help more of them transition into mature, confident and successful adults.

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## Three Homeless Youth Housed and Employed in Two Months

Edward, Damon and Susan were all homeless teens referred to Build Futures by another Orange County nonprofit.

Siblings, Susan and Damon had lived with their mother who, herself, was on the verge of homelessness and had no place for her children to stay.

Edward, a friend of the siblings, was trying to escape an abusive household and had no one to turn to and nowhere to go. Build Futures provided phones and bus passes for the three teens and was able to help them pay for a month of housing. With a roof over their heads, a means of transportation and the ability to communicate with the outside world, the teens were able to focus on obtaining ID and Social Security cards, obtaining employment, food stamps and medical insurance. Helped by Build Futures, all three were able to obtain employment through a job program as well as work part-time at the bike shop. In addition, Edward and Susan worked to receive a bike to use as a means of transportation.

They were able to cover half of their second month's rent, and by the time month three rolled around, the trio was able to pay the third month's rent on their own!

They are all working very hard and have plans to get an apartment once they have saved enough money to cover rent, furniture and the security deposit. They also all hope to get their GEDs, pursue a career and further their education. Build Futures provided them hope and a hand up to self-sufficiency and independence. They also got their first real chance for a future free from poverty.

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**Build Futures is thankful to all those who have purchased and donated bikes to create jobs for the homeless youth in our community. Your continued help will Build Futures for these youth. Thanks for Your Support!**

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Bikes Build Futures employs Build Futures' homeless youth clients.

Buy or Donate a Bike  
Second Saturday of Each Month  
9am to 12pm  
2454A North Glassell, Orange 92865  
Cross streets: Fletcher and Glassell

To enhance and support our services,  
**DONATE TODAY**

Online giving is available at [www.buildfutures.org](http://www.buildfutures.org)

Make checks payable to:  
Build Futures  
19036 Stonehurst Lane  
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

# How can you help?

Check out our [wish list](#) for donation ideas!

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*Build Futures offers hope to youth in crisis.*

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Build Futures is a 501 (c) 3 Tax Exempt Charitable Nonprofit whose mission is to help homeless, runaway, and at-risk youth ages 18 to 24 achieve their maximum potential and lead fulfilling lives within our community. For more information, visit [www.buildfutures.org](http://www.buildfutures.org)

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