



## L.O.S.E.R. – Likable, Optimistic, Skilled, Eager, Resourceful

Hidden among the trees along Santiago Creek, 16-year-old Ben built a shack incorporating everything he needed for physical survival; lacking only the essentials required for emotional perseverance: love and affection.

The plywood shelter was constructed on a concrete slab he hand poured. Filtered water for drinking was pumped in. Discrete cooking and heat came from a low-smoke wood kiln. And a heavily locked door offered safety.

There alone, the boy had escaped from a dysfunctional family, where dad was a narcotics dealer and mom worked the streets and abused drugs.

“I was always told I was a loser who would never accomplish anything,” said Ben “I’m my own person now. I want to be a success, the best at what I do, better than anyone who called me a loser.”

Ben lost his “home” when a fire destroyed all around him. After that, he was homeless.

Ben, who turned 19 in July, is among thousands of homeless young adults scraping by across Orange County. A church member who had been helping him referred Ben to Build Futures.

Build Futures paid the rent for a room for a month and the security deposit for Ben. We provided interview clothes, shoes, food and food referrals and basic necessities. We then worked with him to get his social security card and paid for him to get his California ID. We also provided him a phone, bus pass and bike so he had transportation to secure this needed “right to work” documentation and could communicate with Build Futures. He obtained food stamps and medical insurance with our help connecting him to the appropriate agencies.

## A Project on the Horizon

The growing issue of homelessness in our county is a critical community problem. The most recent OC Department of Education statistics indicate that 28,000 homeless students are in Orange County public schools. This number has increased by 6,000 in two years.

A link to the Build Futures online database of resources, [www.buildfutures.org/resources](http://www.buildfutures.org/resources), currently shows over 650 resource providers but these resources alone have not been sufficient to reduce homelessness in Orange County.

To more efficiently address the needs of the homeless and to assist those who are providing services to them, Build Futures has proposed a new project to help erase many of the barriers facing the homeless and the people serving them.

## Orange County Local Untapped Resources (OCLUR)

OCLUR is a countywide, community based comprehensive system for sharing resources. The efficient pooling of both tangible and information-based resources will help to limit the overlap of services and fill in the gaps when needed, aid in the coordination of existing services, and ultimately help get people off the street and into housing more quickly, enabling homeless recipients to become self sufficient faster.

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With this documentation he was now able to work at Bikes Build Futures and earn some money to help pay his rent and develop “learn to work” job skills. These vital job skills such as coming to work on time, dressing appropriately, getting along with co-workers, proper workplace language and behavior along with pride in producing quality work will help Ben become a valuable employee in the career of his choice. Ben is very committed to working on the donated bikes, training other youth to recondition bikes and is accountable for the finished product to bring to market.

Build Futures partnered with Career Wise to get his resume done. This week Ben got a full-time job, facilitated by Build Futures. In addition, Ben has started school to continue his education and receive his high school diploma. Computer courses will be a focus of the curriculum he is taking.

Ben is a remarkable, intelligent young man with a positive attitude toward life in spite of his past circumstances. By working with Build Futures there is no doubt Ben will be the success he has set out to be and achieve more than those who called him a loser.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Providing Support for Forward Movement

“I knew from working at County of Orange that homeless youth was an underserved population. I was impressed that Kathy really understood the issues and the players in a relatively short time. She moved to OC from the east coast and had to rapidly decode the Orange County nonprofit culture to start her own nonprofit and get things accomplished.” Explained Ellen, one of Build Futures volunteers.

Ellen got involved with the organization about a year ago and has served in many capacities. She does everything from preparing grants and providing research support, to attending meetings on behalf of the organization.

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OCLUR will feature 24-hour real time access via computer and smart phone and connect non-profit agencies, faith based organizations, social service agencies, service organizations (including: Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, etc.), health providers and anyone in the community who could provide resources that could help those experiencing poverty and homelessness.

By collaborating through an online database, all partners will gain access to a web-based clearinghouse of new and previously untapped resources to serve those in need, including items essential for daily life, volunteers, and services. The OCLUR will facilitate and accelerate the process of rapid re-housing and self-sufficiency for those with the most need in our community. Resources available on the OCLUR will include but are not limited to:

- emergency and support services which include rapid re-housing through free rooms, below market rents, and rental subsidies for initial housing placements
- jobs, job training and internships
- volunteer mentors
- transportation through bus passes and donated cars
- housing furnishings and supplies – furniture, bedding, bath and kitchen goods
- donated phones
- computers and computer access through multiple resources
- basic needs – clothes, groceries, hygiene products, diapers, formula

Additionally, donated services, including but not limited to, pro bono medical services, mental health treatment, legal services, tutoring, haircuts, transportation and volunteers will be offered. These types of collaborations are the key to creating a successful system to truly help the homeless in Orange County.

For more information contact Kathy Tillotson at [Kathy@BuildFutures.org](mailto:Kathy@BuildFutures.org) or 714 907-7358.

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Ellen so willingly serves because her belief is that by providing administrative support, she can help keep Kathy, Build Futures executive director, from drowning in the little details and day-to-day tasks so that she can focus on the kids and achieve her vision and goals for Build Futures and Bikes Build Futures.

She hopes that her efforts of research support and grant applications will lead to substantial funding so that Build Futures will be able to hire appropriate staff to keep the organization moving forward.

Ellen believes in the mission of Build Futures so much that she recruited a friend to become involved with the organization as well. Her comrade has an IT background and has assisted Build Futures in solving some major IT challenges.

“Learning about the operation of Orange County nonprofits has been rather astonishing. I never truly understood the extent and complexity of homelessness in Orange County,” stated Ellen, “I really enjoy working with other galvanizing volunteers.”

**We will be selling and collecting bikes at the upcoming**

**American Diabetes Tour de Cure in Aliso Viejo**

**Saturday, September 29**

The Tour de Cure OC is an event like no other. Ride through 8 scenic coastal communities from Surf2 Summit. Follow your ride with a family celebration that includes lunch, live entertainment, awards celebration and fun for the entire family!

If you need a bike for the ride, Bikes Build Futures has one for you, visit our online catalog at [www.BikesBuildFutures.com](http://www.BikesBuildFutures.com). Kids, bring your bikes and take part in the bike parade where you can decorate your ride and win a prize!

The Tour de Cure OC offers easy family rides of 10 miles or less to more challenging routes of 50 miles or more with several options in between.

For more information visit [www.tour.diabetes.org](http://www.tour.diabetes.org)

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

**Bikes Build Futures** employs Build Futures' homeless youth clients.

***Donate or Buy a Bike***

***Tue. /Thurs 9 - 2 or Sat. 9 - 12***

2454A North Glassell,  
Orange 92865

[www.BikesBuildFutures.com](http://www.BikesBuildFutures.com)

**714 907-7358**

*Build Futures offers hope to youth in crisis.*

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) or contact Kathy at 714 907-7358 or [Kathy@BuildFutures.org](mailto:Kathy@BuildFutures.org)

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