



MARK MARTINEZ FOR RSM NEWS

SERVICE WITH A SMILE: Rebecca Ayala from The Family Church helps organize breakfast cereal at the "Pack-o-Rama."

Rancho church lends a hand

Volunteers from The Family Church took part in the Orange County Rescue Mission's Pack-o-Rama.

By **ALEJANDRA MOLINA**
STAFF WRITER

In Orange County, the homeless can often be overlooked among the lifestyles of the rich.

Rarely does anyone perceive the 'OC' as having homeless people living under bridges, in motels or in cars.

Nearly 35,000 Orange

County residents are barely scraping by, according to the Orange County Rescue Mission, an organization that helps hungry and homeless families in Orange County get back on their feet. They deliver hope by providing food, shelter, clothing, guidance, counseling, education, job training, parenting classes and health

care.

To reach the poverty stricken, The Family Church in Rancho Santa Margarita has been working with the Orange County Rescue Mission for the past four years.

Last Thursday, The Family Church along with other local

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churches helped with the rescue mission's Pack-o-Rama to help families living in hotels have a Thanksgiving meal.

"It's just one of the ways to give back to the community," said Barbara Ayala, office manager and assistant to The Family Church pastor.

Ayala along with about 10

over 9,000 children in Orange County, according to The Orange County Rescue Mission. The families with children represent 70 percent of the homeless in the county. Most of their parents have jobs, but just don't make enough to pay rent and buy food.

According to the Orange County Rescue Mission, the homeless must stretch their money so far that 60 percent of them go regularly without meals.

"We think it's important to help out all year,"

REBECCA AYALA
THE FAMILY CHURCH

other Family Church members volunteered to package food that night.

"It's wonderful... there's people there that take time out of their schedule to help others," Ayala said.

The rescue mission provides around 327,348 meals a year for those in need.

"We think it's important to help out all year," said Ayala.

Family Church Board Member Mary Burt is in charge of the outreach programs and agrees with Ayala in that helping the less fortunate should be a yearly service.

"We try to do it more at other times of the year...everyone is volunteering during this time of year," Burt said. "It's the rest of the year that everyone needs the help."

These homeless include

Burt said her dream is to reach out to people they are close to but did was not sure how to locate them.

"The Orange County Rescue Mission already has families and we partnered with them to help those families," Burt said.

Throughout the year, The Family Church provides meals and clothing to those in need.

The Family Church is a small congregation with less than 100 members but Ayala said that figure doesn't impact the services they are able to provide.

It doesn't matter what size of church you are... each person can give their own blessing," Ayala said.

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