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## OC Rescue Mission volunteers honored at White House

Christian Examiner staff report

WASHINGTON, D. C. — A small entourage affiliated with the Orange County Rescue Mission was treated to a White House reception April 29 at which President George W. Bush lauded their volunteer service.

Bush invited the Southern California delegation to join about 100 other volunteer workers to kick-off the annual National Volunteer Week, started in 1974 by President Richard Nixon. Other groups attending included Camp Fire USA, Jumpstart, AmeriCorps, Hope Worldwide and Partners of the Americas. Another 100 or so Peace Corp volunteers were also on hand.

The Orange County group included Jim Palmer, president of the rescue mission and his wife, Michelle. In addition to his leadership at the rescue mission, Palmer is a U.S. Senate-confirmed board member of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which encourages a culture of giving through volunteer and service grants.

Also attending the kick-off reception was Chip Williams, who donated hundreds of hours as an architect for the mission's Village of Hope. Williams, who was joined on the trip by his wife,

## WHITE HOUSE...

Continued from page 1

Sue, is with Gensler Architects.

Also on the trip was Jewel Loff-Polk, manager of the Washington Mutual Financial Center in Mission Viejo. Loff-Polk has volunteered for the Rescue Mission for more than 17 years mentoring young women at the House of Hope. She also serves as secretary on the mission's board of directors.

Rounding out the group were Mark and Hanne Bucher, described as steady and regular volunteers at the mission's new Mustard Seed Ranch facility, where they have contributed numerous weekends with their family accomplishing major work projects there.

In highlighting the importance of volunteering, Bush thanked the 61 million Americans who donate their time to community causes.

"There is a lot of volunteer work here in America," Bush told the crowd. "Every day there are just countless acts of compassion. And interestingly enough, it doesn't require one government law. As a matter of fact, oftentimes people are inspired by a higher law.

"Those of you who are here today

understand the lesson, how you can gain by giving. You can understand how volunteering can transform the souls, both who give and those they help.

"When you teach a child to read, for example, you not only improve their chances for success in the world, but you become invested in the progress of a young life. When you visit the elderly, you remind them that they are loved, and you remind yourself of how deeply we all feel the need for compassion. When you help the homeless find shelter, you remove the pain of need, and rediscover the resiliency of the human spirit."

Since the beginning of his administration seven years ago, Bush has placed a high priority on community service, including his development of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

"I believe strongly in the admonition, 'To whom much is given, much is required.' Those of you here today are living up to that noble calling," the president said. "And you carry on the best traditions of American citizenship. In my first inaugural address, I said it's important to be a citizen, not a spectator. And there's no better way to be a citizen than to be a soldier in the armies of compassion, a foot soldier.

And so today we commemorate your work and the work of volunteers all across the country here at the White House. I appreciate the lasting legacy that you've helped create in the hearts of our fellow citizens."

The multi-faceted Orange County Rescue Mission offers a wide range of programs including its Hope Family transitional housing for homeless men, women and children; the Mustard Seed Ranch, a working ranch/retreat for troubled youth and Casa de Salud (Home for Health) Health Clinic.

The centerpiece of the mission, however, is its new Village of Hope, a secured, community-based neighborhood on the former Tustin Marine Corps Air Station. The villages offer a wide range of services, including housing, a child development center, playground, parent education center, vocational training classrooms, health care facility, warehouse for donations and support offices.

The rescue mission also established OperationOC to provide rapid recovery response to local disasters.

**For information about the rescue mission, visit [www.rescuemission.org](http://www.rescuemission.org).**

See WHITE HOUSE, page 15