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A “Home Run” for O.C. Abused Children *13th Annual Ambassador Luncheon*

Costa Mesa – Almost 500 guests gathered today at the Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport for the 13th Annual Orangewood Ambassador Luncheon. The luncheon is held for current and prospective Orangewood Ambassadors (donors who give \$1,000 or more annually to the Foundation). Dave Ritchie, former board chairman, was honored for his longtime support of the Foundation. A former foster youth shared his story of triumph and hope thanks to the help of Orangewood. Guest speaker was Major League Baseball hall-of-famer Rod Carew

The cost of the luncheon was 100% underwritten by eight sponsors: Acra Aerospace, Anaheim Ducks / Honda Center, Angels Baseball Foundation, Bilek Racing, McDermott Will & Emery, Toshiba, Union Bank and Wells Fargo. New Orangewood Board Chairman Bruce Fetter announced to the room that two anonymous donors had offered a challenge gift of \$150,000 that would be fulfilled if attendees would match that amount. Despite the economy, the audience was moved by the various speakers and at press time the Foundation was just \$21,000 short of the goal with the full expectation of meeting it. As a result, the luncheon is expected to net over \$300,000 for Orangewood’s programs for abused children and at-risk families.

Dave Ritchie, Orangewood’s board chairman from 2005-2010 and a long-time Foundation supporter, was honored with the 2010 General Lyon Crystal Vision Award. The annual award is given to a worthy recipient who has given of their time and resources and who reflects the unending commitment to Orange County children that has been demonstrated by General William Lyon. In attendance to support Dave were all three other former or current chairmen: General William Lyon (founding chairman, 1981-1993), John Hagestad (1993-2005) and Bruce Fetter (2010-).

Keynote speaker Rod Carew shared his story of abuse in his native country, Panama, at the hands of his father, his move to the United States at a teenager, and his successful professional baseball career which culminated in his induction into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame in 1991. His speech was followed by a question and answer session with his friend and Orangewood Emeritus board member Doug DeCinces. Carew and DeCinces played together on the California Angels from 1982-1985. (Other baseball-related guests included Angel's owner Arte Moreno and wife Carole, and retired MLB pitcher Jim Abbott.)

The most inspiring part of the luncheon came when former foster youth Jorge Cardenas spoke. Cardenas started his speech by saying, "My life before 13 is pretty much a blur." From a very early age, he and his family moved frequently because of his father's and subsequently step-father's drug activities. After a police raid of a motel room the family was staying in, his parents were arrested and Cardenas (then 8 years old) and his three brothers were taken to the Orangewood Children's Home, the country-run shelter for abused children. After a few years in the foster care system, the boys were reunited with their mother. A move from Anaheim to Irvine put Cardenas in the company of more positive peers and he joined the football and wrestling teams and began focusing on school and homework. With encouragement from teachers, he began to see new possibilities in his life other than the drug and gang life he witnessed earlier in his childhood.

With the help of scholarships from Orangewood Children's Foundation, Cardenas is now a senior at Cal. State Fullerton. He is majoring in Corporate Finance and has a 3.0 GPA. (Unfortunately two of his younger brothers didn't fare as well and are serving time in prison.) For the last two years, Cardenas has also had the encouragement and support of his mentor, Orangewood board member Jeff Roos. Cardenas described Roos as "one of the truly amazing and inspirational people I've met through Orangewood... I can now honestly say I know what kind of a man I should be like."

Cardenas concluded his speech by saying, "Over the years I have received help from several Orangewood programs financially and emotionally. But the biggest way that Orangewood has

helped me isn't through one of their programs...it's that they helped me feel normal. When you've had the past that I've had, you look around and others look normal but you feel different. Once I found out about Orangewood Children's Foundation, I became more open. And I felt normal, which is an awesome feeling."

About Orangewood Children's Foundation

Orangewood Children's Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1981. Our mission is to provide innovative services for abused and neglected children and at-risk families to end the cycle of child abuse one life at a time. Our programs focus on the areas of education, supportive services, life-stage transition and child abuse prevention. Support for our programs is based on our successful outcomes due to our extensive understanding of the needs of our clients and effective partnerships with public and private organizations. In our history we have helped over 74,000 kids find their wings and soar. Beyond our programs, for thousands in our communities Orangewood means "family," "opportunity" and "hope." Learn how you can help at www.orangewoodfoundation.org.