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Contact: Sara Bazant
Director of Marketing
Office: 714-619-0206
Cell: 562-743-7272

RETURNING THE FAVOR – AIDING A LIFE
Former Child Abuse Victim Comes to the Aid of Orangewood's Founding Chairman

Immediately after homebuilder General William Lyon collapsed while speaking at a luncheon last month, Jayson Lewis and Don Boland leapt to their feet, made their way to the stage and began performing CPR. No one knew it at the time but as Jayson performed chest compressions, he was coming to the aid of a man who had come to the aid of thousands of kids like him over the past three decades. **The stories of both men's lives overlap in one area – child abuse. One was a victim; the other a visionary.**

Jayson Lewis's story is one that few people in his life know. He was born in 1970 to drug addicted parents. He remembers needles scattered around his house and hiding in the closet at times. From the ages of one to six he was placed many times at the Albert Sitton Home. Albert Sitton was the county's emergency shelter at the time. It had been portioned out of juvenile hall and was increasingly over-crowded with abuse victims. Jayson has only vague memories of the Home – the environment looking grey with not much warmth, and a sandbox. His father died of a heroin overdose when he was six.

A year later in 1977 he was adopted by his paternal grandparents. He grew up in Orange and attended Villa Park High School. He has been in police work for 15 years, the last eight with the Huntington Beach Police Department. Today he is 38 years old and a detective in their property crimes unit. He is married and the father of three sons. He is working on earning his college degree at CSULB.

As Jayson was settling into life with his grandparents in the late 1970's, General William Lyon and William Steiner began discussions about building a new shelter for abused and neglected children in Orange County. General Lyon had been bringing Christmas trees and gifts to the children at the Albert Sitton Home for years and wanted to do more. Lyon and Steiner envisioned a new shelter – one that would be child-friendly, offer plenty of space for children to run and play, and have a home-like feel. After much discussion and study, Orangewood Children's Foundation was established in 1981 with General Lyon as its chairman of the board of directors. In five years the Foundation raised \$8.5 million (80% from the private sector) and the Orangewood Children's Home officially opened its doors in November, 1985.

Last month on November 7 Jayson was sitting in the audience along with 500 other donors and prospects at Orangewood's annual Ambassador Luncheon. General Lyon was the last speaker of the event. He joked that it was nice to be there and that it was nice to be anywhere at his age (85). He began to discuss the continuing need to help abused children despite the down economy. Jayson was filling out a donation card when the General collapsed. He and Huntington Beach firefighter Don Boland automatically went into "responder" mode, made it to the stage and started CPR until paramedics arrived. General Lyon was rushed to Hoag Hospital and diagnosed with a heart arrhythmia. He was released from the hospital several days later and back on the job on Monday, December 1 as CEO of William Lyon Homes in Newport Beach.

Jayson has never met the General but heard that he's a very caring man. When he was a Huntington Beach patrol officer he had to bring a few children to the Orangewood Children's Home. He was

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impressed by the warmth, the kid-friendly environment and the caring staff. He says, “It is so much nicer than what I remember at the Albert Sitton Home.”

Of the convergence of his philanthropic efforts with Jayson’s childhood, General Lyon says “Willa Dean (his wife) and I have committed ourselves both emotionally and financially to Orangewood and its predecessor, The Albert Sitton Home, for nearly three decades. We passionately believe in the theory that abused and neglected children need to have a shelter where they feel safe. They need to be allowed to grow and mature into fine, contributing members of adult society. Proof of this enlightening point certainly came ‘full circle’ since Jayson Lewis as a youth was, himself, a resident of The Albert Sitton Home. Jayson’s concern, kindness and immediate response in coming to my aid certainly confirms this belief. Thank you and God Bless Jayson Lewis, Don Boland and the many others who were involved with my recovery. The entire Lyon family is deeply grateful.”

When sharing with his wife the interesting coincidence of his childhood past and General Lyon’s establishment of Orangewood, Jayson says she remarked what a blessing it was that God placed him there that day – a sentiment everyone who hears the story shares.

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