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## **UNITED TO END HOMELESSNESS PARTNERS WITH APARTMENT ASSOCIATION OF ORANGE COUNTY TO HELP SOLVE ORANGE COUNTY'S HOMELESSNESS CRISIS**

*Partnership boosts Welcome Home OC initiative that incentivizes private market rental property owners to open critically-needed rental housing units to formerly homeless individuals with vouchers and supportive services*

**IRVINE, Calif. – September 16, 2019 –** [United to End Homelessness](#) (U2EH), a community-wide initiative empowered by Orange County United Way, announces a new partnership with one of California's most influential and dynamic rental-housing organizations, the [Apartment Association of Orange County](#) (AAOC).

The partnership aims to significantly scale up U2EH's "Welcome Home OC" program which, in partnership with the County of Orange and a number of non-profit partner agencies, provides an opportunity for Orange County's private market rental-property owners to play a pivotal role in ending the local homelessness crisis. This will be achieved by making critically-needed rental-housing units available for rent to formerly homeless individuals and families holding vouchers and receiving supportive services.

The AAOC partnership will allow U2EH to significantly scale up the initiative's successful rental pilot effort, launched last fall. It will also help grow U2EH's network of Orange County rental property owners who are committed to providing homeless individuals with needed housing and wrap-around supportive services. Supportive services include case management, budgeting, problem-solving, tenant education and more.

"The 2019 Orange County Point-in-Time Count conducted earlier this year revealed that there are 6,860 individuals in our community without a place to call home; 40% of those who hold housing vouchers are unable to be placed due to the severe lack of housing in Orange County," said Sue Parks, Orange County United Way's President and CEO. "Our goal is to galvanize private rental property owners to help make housing a reality for our Orange County neighbors experiencing homelessness. With the help of caring AAOC and its members, we can do just that. We greatly appreciate their partnership."

## **AAOC Homelessness Task Force**

As one of its first steps, AAOC has established an internal homelessness task force. The group is comprised of select AAOC board members and is chaired by Nick Lieberman, President, Bona Fide Mortgage and a member of the U2EH Leadership Council. The goal of the task force is to inform AAOC's membership – comprised of apartment owners, managers, management

companies and industry suppliers – about “Welcome Home OC” and, in partnership with U2EH, educate them about its myriad benefits.

The task force is developing a year-long engagement plan to educate and mobilize its members to take action. AAOC also intends to recognize and celebrate members who step up to participate and thus help improve the lives of those most at risk in the Orange County community.

“For nearly six decades, AAOC and its members have remained steadfastly committed to ensuring the adequate supply of quality rental housing in Orange County,” said David Cordero, executive director at AAOC, whose members collectively own and operate more than 85,000 rental units throughout the county. “We’re proud to partner with Orange County United Way and United to End Homelessness to help educate our members about the impact they can have in bridging the housing gap for our most vulnerable population and mobilize them to help solve one of the most pressing challenges our community has ever faced.”

### **“Welcome Home OC” – How it Works**

The Welcome Home OC program is designed to remove potential financial barriers for private sector rental property owners who make units available for rent to formerly homeless individuals and families. Program benefits include signing bonuses, holding fees, security deposits, vacancy fees and more.

A 24-hour hotline and a property owner liaison will also be made available to participating property owners and managers. The program will also ensure that the highest level of necessary supportive services, led by a dedicated case manager, is provided for residents.

### **Proof of Concept**

Not only has this private-sector solution been key to significantly reducing homelessness in other communities throughout the U.S., here in Orange County, Ernie Schroeder, president and CEO of Schroeder Management Company, Inc., has already dedicated a portion of his company’s apartment unit portfolio for use by homeless veterans, individuals and families with rental vouchers.

As part of the “Welcome Home OC” pilot program, nine Schroeder apartment units have been made available to 14 formerly homeless individuals who now have a place to call home. The decision was an easy one for Schroeder, who has long provided housing for those in the greatest of need.

“For more than 30 years, I’ve been working closely with local housing authorities to provide low-income individuals and families with a clean, safe and stable living environment where they can receive needed supportive services and live a better life,” said Schroeder. “Since then I’ve never looked back. This process is a win-win for everyone involved. It provides sound business benefits to property owners while at the same time, a rewarding opportunity to better the community by helping to end homelessness in Orange County.”

The collaboration between U2EH and AAOC is a key element in the private sector rental solution to ending homelessness which, along with the County’s effort to build 2,700 new permanent supportive housing units, will help end homelessness in Orange County.

To learn more about “Welcome Home OC,” visit [www.WelcomeHomeOC.org](http://www.WelcomeHomeOC.org).

## **About United to End Homelessness**

Launched in February 2018, United to End Homelessness is led by an all-star group of leaders from Orange County's top business, philanthropic, governmental, faith-based and non-profit organizations – all committed to ending homelessness in our community. Our work is grounded in bringing the recommendations of the 2017 UC Irvine study "Homelessness in Orange County: The Costs to Our Community" to life, with Orange County United Way serving as the backbone of this new collaborative effort. Together we are working to bring the issue of homelessness to the forefront of the community's collective discussion and create civic engagement that will lead to meaningful and lasting results. Together we can and we will #EndHomelessnessOC. For more information, please visit [www.unitedtoendhomelessness.org](http://www.unitedtoendhomelessness.org).

## **About Orange County United Way**

Today's Orange County United Way is doing more for the Education, Health, Housing and Financial Stability of every person in Orange County. More than a fundraiser, we're hands-on, delivering more than 50 Community Impact programs countywide. We focus on long-term solutions to the most critical interconnected challenges facing local children and families. United Way is doing more to make long-term measurable difference in the lives of children and families right here in Orange County. To learn more or do more with us, visit [www.unitedwayoc.org](http://www.unitedwayoc.org).

## **About Apartment Association of Orange County**

Since 1961, the Apartment Association of Orange County (AAOC) has represented and supported rental-property owners, managers and industry suppliers. AAOC is an influential and dynamic apartment association and a leader in protecting the interests of the rental housing industry in California. Also, membership with the AAOC includes membership with the National Apartment Association (NAA) and the California Rental Housing Association (CalRHA), which offer even more protection and advocacy at the national and state levels, respectively. For more information, visit [www.aaoc.com/](http://www.aaoc.com/).