

Orangewood Children's Home, A Sense of Home

By Judith M. Guido, Founder & Principal of Guido & Associates



**Jerri Pick, LEED AP and Paul Wong, VP both from Mission Landscape Architecture.
Photos courtesy of Mission Landscape Companies**

As part of giving back to the community and its corporate stewardship focus, Mission Landscape Companies each year donate its support to the Orangewood Children's Home. All 4 divisions, landscape architecture, development, tree-care and maintenance worked on this charitable project in the effort to enhance the landscape and environment of Orangewood Children's' Home. Mission's design intent is to provide a sense of home to these children in creating a calm, welcoming, residential feel to this safe haven for the traumatized children who pass through the front doors.

Orangewood Children's Home [OCH] in California is Orange County's Emergency Shelter Home, a licensed group home providing emergency shelter care 24-hours per day, 365-days per year, for children that have been removed from their families or primary caregivers because of abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Each month, OCH assumed the care of an average of 91 children, and was able to secure alternate homes for an average of 92 children each month; the average length of stay was 24 days



Entrance to Orangewood Children's Home.

Updating to be water-wise and efficient

The first stage of work the Mission Landscape Companies completed was on-going landscape maintenance work which was done by the Mission Landscape Maintenance unit, as well as updating and replacing the irrigation system to make it efficient and water-wise. Both Rainbird and Hunter donated product to help with the irrigation work. Next, Mission Tree Care performed corrective and preventative related tree work around the perimeter areas. Mission also designed and installed interior plants for the visitor greeting and administrative areas.

Entering a beautiful, safe place for children

Although situated between courthouse buildings and the freeway, the newly designed screen trees now provide privacy that will make the children feel that they have entered a beautiful, safe community, with areas for play and interaction with others; the way “home” should be. “We want them to “be children” here’, stated David Dubois, the CEO of Mission Landscape Companies. “We wish to enhance the sense of whimsy already provided by the several donated playhouses by using color and texture in plant materials. A refurbished vegetable garden will give the kids a chance to get their hands dirty and discover the joy and peace that comes with digging in the dirt and handpicking their food”, said Jerri Pick, LEED-AP team member of Mission Landscape Architecture.



One of many vegetable gardens for the children to plant and pick.

Long term plans

In concert with Mission’s on-going landscape maintenance work, the overall plan is to continue working with the existing “bones” of the landscape, and a rose garden that will be dedicated to Mrs. Lyon, whose vision made Orangewood a reality. Long-term plans include designing themes for the ‘Villages’ where the children live and sleep, along with updating the ball field and park on the premises. Orangewood Children’s Home is owned and operated by the Orange County Social Services Agency with Juvenile Court authority.