



# AVAG News

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## AVAG-CBMC Rally Around OPD Officer



Police and firefighters line up for breakfast at the Officer Sharif Muzayen fundraiser at The Villa in Orange on December 20.



OPD Officer Sharif Muzayen gives the "V" sign for victory from his hospital bed in Orange.

The day after Orange Police Department Officer Sharif Muzayen was struck down and critically injured on December 10 by a drunk driver while on duty in Orange, members of the Orange-based non-profit American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) teamed up with the Christian Business Men's Connection (CBMC) to plan a fundraiser/toy drive for the officer and his family before Christmas.

Muzayen, who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan with the Marine Corps before joining OPD, was walking from his patrol car at 3 a.m. to help another driver when a drunk driver slammed into him causing severe, major injuries to his legs and pelvis. A fellow officer applied a life-saving tourniquet to his severely damaged leg before an ambulance rushed him to a local hospital. Otherwise, he would have died at the crash scene at 500 N. Cambridge. At that time, doctors warned that Muzayen might lose one of his legs. While the three-year OPD veteran remained in a medically induced coma, the suspect, a 27-year-old Tustin woman was arrested for felony DUI

as AVAG and CBMC volunteers went to work planning, organizing, and advertising the December 20 fundraiser/toy drive.

One of the first questions among AVAG volunteers Craig Schmelter – a former OPD SWAT officer, AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto and CBMC Event Coordinator Scott McReynolds was: Do we provide food, if yes, where? And, if yes, when? They decided on breakfast as the best time only five days before Christmas. Then, the big question, where? Since AVAG and CBMC representatives had held many successful events at The Villa in Orange, at 510 E. Kattella Ave., they turned to Villa owner Tim Zimprich and his skilled staff. They have hosted weddings, banquets, reunions, corporate celebrations and birthdays for more than three decades at The Villa.

When asked how much it would cost to put together a breakfast for an estimated 150 people, Zimprich said he would sponsor the breakfast at no cost to the fundraising campaign. The Villa owner was trilled in the holiday spirit.

With that good news, the trio of volunteers went about seeking media coverage, donations for children's toys, an event photographer, and spreading the word throughout the Orange County and LA law enforcement communities, as well as local churches and CBMC-related groups. By the morning of December 20, everything came together, including The Villa staff putting together a splendid breakfast

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Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park and Santiago Creek Estates holiday fun.

# AVAG Communities Holiday Celebrations

Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto

## Christmas Spirit at Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park



Jeff Scism, right, AVAG Team Leader in Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park, stands next to Doreen Matsumoto as Jeff's children delight in the goodies in their gift container, received a few days before Christmas.



David Rosales, who served in the Marine Corps, smiles for the camera as one of his curious daughters looks on from the background as AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto flashes the "V" for Victory sign.

## AVAG News

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This is one of the gift containers distributed to some veterans a few days before Christmas at the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park.

## Holiday Fun at Santiago Creek Estates



Veterans and volunteers went around Santiago Creek Estates in Orange a few days before Christmas singing Christmas carols to veterans and their families.



From left, Women In Networking volunteer Lana Martinez, Veteran Don Larsen, and AVAG Chaplain, admire the patriot pillow case after they presented it to him during a holiday AVAG gift-giving visit to veterans at Santiago Creek Estates in Orange a few days before Christmas. Volunteers from Quilts of Valor carefully crafted the custom-made pillow cases for the veterans.



# AVAG Communities as of February 28, 2017

**1) Santiago Creek Estates (Orange)**

692 N. Adele Lane  
Orange, CA 92867

**2) Santiago Creekside Estates**

1925 E. La Veta Ave.  
Orange, CA 92866

**3) Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates**

3945 Bradford Street  
La Verne, CA 91750

**4) Diamond Bar Estates**

21217 Washington St.  
Walnut, CA 91789

**5) Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park**

2505 W. Foothill Blvd.  
San Bernardino, CA 92410

**6) Santiago Island Village**

3505 Gateway Road  
Bethel Island, CA 94511

**7) The Willows of Santiago**

2575 S. Willow Avenue  
Fresno, CA 937251

For further information about times and meetings call John Stryker Meyer: 619-892-5983, or e-mail him at: [idahonezero@sbcglobal.net](mailto:idahonezero@sbcglobal.net)

**Editor's note:** These are the first communities among the forty Affordable Community Living and Santiago Communities where the AVAG program has been established. Veterans and their spouses from other sites are always welcome to attend AVAG meetings.

## AVAG-CBMC Rally Around OPD Officer continued

with pastries, eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, fresh-cut fruits, breakfast juices, coffee, teas and an open bar packed with sodas and health drinks.

By 8 a.m., the first toy donors and contributors began to appear at the 510 E. Katella Avenue dining room as Villa staff began to bring out the food, fruits and beverages. Matsumoto and volunteers from the non-profit Women In Networking, Melissa Applebaum, Jackie Arias, Linda Compton, and Doctor Witt, began greeting people at the door and accepting donations, both toys and money. By 8:30, the official starting time of the breakfast, lines formed as police officers, firefighters, from several counties, federal agents, parole and probation officers began showing up, paying admission and making donations as the tempo and spirit of the day remained upbeat and hopeful for Muzayen who remained hospitalized and in critical condition that morning.

At 9:35 a.m. it became clear that food for 150 people wasn't going to be enough. Without a word spoken, Zimprich and his staff quietly went about preparing more eggs, bacon, sausage, and fresh fruit for another 150-plus guests. At the scheduled end of breakfast, 10:30 a.m., people were still arriving. Among those in attendance at that time were Orange Mayor Teresa "Tita" Smith, Orange Police Chief Tom Kisela, Orange City Councilmember Kim Nichols, Miss City of Orange Katie Wayland and several representatives from the Orange Police Association.

The wife of Officer Muzayen left her husband's bedside vigil for an appearance at the breakfast. Vanessa Muzayen said she was, "Amazed at the number of people here. I can't believe it, there's a room full of people, most of whom I don't know, yet they are here in support of my husband." Grateful that her husband was still alive, she added: "We'll have Christmas in the hospital, because my children have not been able to see their father yet, due to doctors' orders...we're all so grateful for everyone showing up today. Please tell everyone thank you, thank you so much."

By noon, the room had thinned and Matsumoto and her volunteers began counting the contributions, as others reviewed the toys and gave interviews to local and LA media. At the first counting, the total astounded the volunteers: They had counted more than \$11,000, as a few late arrivals showed up after noon to make donations. AVAG's board of directors donated \$1000. By 1:30, the count had increased to nearly \$13,000. Before Christmas, several of the AVAG volunteers delivered more than \$15,000 in donations to the Muzayen family and toys for their two children.

The Orange County Register reported on Jan. 30 that Officer Muzayen was released from the hospital Jan. 17 and that he is facing at least two years of physical therapy and rehabilitation. His goal in life is to return to doing police work in Orange. He bears no grudge toward the drunk driver who struck him, he's merely asking that justice be served when she gets her day in court. ✧



From top left, clockwise: From left: AVAG Director and former OPD SWAT Officer Craig Schmelter, AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, Mrs. Vanessa Muzayen, The Villa owner, Tim Zimprich, Scott McReynolds, CBMC Event Coordinator, and John S. Meyer, AVAG Director; Miss City of Orange, Katie Wayland, City of Orange Mayor Teresa "Tita" Smith, WIN volunteer and Mrs. Santa, Debbie Susan Fogarty Inland, Mr. Santa Claus, Mrs. Vanessa Muzayen, and City of Orange Councilmember Kim Nichols; Mrs. Vanessa Muzayen; Law enforcement officers, city officials, firefighters and local residents enjoy breakfast at The Villa in Orange to raises money and toys for OPD officer severely injured on duty December 10; AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto is interviewed by one of several media representatives who reported on the fundraiser; The Muzayen family in a photo taken before Christmas. All photographs courtesy of Doreen Matsumoto.