

# THE IMPACT OF Project Hope Alliance

BY JULIE LEAH

**P**roject Hope Alliance (PHA) aims to end homelessness in our community, one child at a time. When children experience housing instability, the added stress and uncertainty makes it difficult for achievement in school and in life. However, homeless children are often hidden in plain sight. "Instead of sleeping on park benches or in tents outside, they sleep in cars, motels, garages, couch surf, and often double/triple shared spaces with other families," said Jennifer Friend, CEO of Project Hope Alliance.

Professional case managers support students by removing barriers caused by homelessness, providing resources like food and hygiene products, and offering academic and life goal assistance through one-on-one case management. Major milestones, such as graduation, obtaining a driver's license, college acceptance, and securing a first job, are celebrated with the students.

Before leading the organization, Jennifer Friend served as a volunteer board member and has a deeply personal connection to the cause, fueled by her own experiences with homelessness. She shared that in her childhood and teen years, her family often moved between motels or stayed with friends due to housing instability. Jennifer said, "I realized the purpose of my story is to lift the invisibility of more than 23,000 students experiencing homelessness in Orange County's schools and show up for these amazing kids so they can access and excel in their education and end the cycle of generational homelessness." A former trial lawyer, Jennifer left her law firm partnership in 2013 to serve as the CEO of PHA.

Jennifer finds daily inspiration in the children she serves. "Like Mary Poppins, I truly believe that anything can happen if you let it. Every day I see the spirit of possibility in our kids and youth. Their tenacity, grit, creativity, and courage drive me to eliminate the obstacles that homelessness brings into their lives so they can dream and bring their dreams to fruition."

Despite their serious mission, PHA maintains a light-hearted approach. Jennifer shared a memorable moment, "We raised \$11,000 for the kids in 5 minutes by stuffing marshmallows in my big mouth. I was a trial lawyer, so I've naturally got a big mouth!"

The children and youth served by Project Hope Alliance are integral to our community. Jennifer emphasized, "Our children sit next to them in the classroom at Estancia High School and Tewinkle Elementary School. They play with them on the soccer field and practice music with them in the band. They are their friends. When we see them for who they are and not their housing status, it changes the way we show up for them."



## BRINGING SUNSHINE TO PROJECT HOPE ALLIANCE: A Community Mural for Love Costa Mesa Day

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### How You Can Help

To learn more about Project Hope Alliance and how you can support its mission, please contact Annie Song, Director of Development, at Annie.S@ProjectHopeAlliance.org. Upcoming projects include preparing kids for the new school year, providing basic resources like food and hygiene products, and fulfilling holiday wishes during their annual Santa's Workshop.

By coming together, we can help end the cycle of homelessness and give every child the chance to succeed.



**O**n May 18, 2024, a team of volunteers united to paint a cheerful

ocean-themed mural at Project Hope Alliance, an organization providing resources for children experiencing homelessness. This initiative was part of Trellis' annual Love Costa Mesa Day, a volunteer-driven event. According to Trellis, "Over 900 volunteers completed 50 projects."

The well-known Costa Mesa muralist, Jennifer Bloomfield (art-bybloomy.com), created the mural's design. Jennifer directed the volunteer team, which included myself, our publisher William, and Juliann Harkness from the Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce, along with various community members who signed up for this city-wide event.

We painted to the upbeat tracks of 1980s music, with the doors and our hearts wide open. Despite a few

painters arriving with a slight cough, health and safety precautions, along with a giant fan, helped us persevere and shine for Costa Mesa.

This event reminded us all that uplifting someone doesn't always require grand gestures. Sometimes, it's the little things, like volunteering early on a Saturday morning. We shared stories, grooved to flashback 1980s music, and wielded our paintbrushes with enthusiasm. On that typical "May gray" day, the sense of community was palpable. And as we painted a big yellow sun in our ocean-themed mural, we could almost feel its warmth.

Before we knew it, the mural was complete. We bid farewell and headed to lunch at the Costa Mesa Civic Center, where a variety of local restaurants offered delicious entrees. The day was a testament to the power of community and the joy of coming together for a common cause.



Jennifer Friend, CEO of Project Hope Alliance

at the center and show up every day on their school campuses."

**Editors Note:**  
We are proud to highlight the mural at Project Hope Alliance's Costa Mesa office, designed by local artist Jennifer Bloomfield, and painted by a group of dedicated volunteers as part of a Love Costa Mesa Day project on May 18, 2024. We at Eastside Living were honored to be part of the group who helped paint the mural. This inspiring artwork symbolizes the incredible work that this local non-profit does to provide resources for homeless children in our community.



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