

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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## Charities ask for help this Valentine's Day

Laguna Niguel couple spend gift budget on donations to needy at Tustin homeless shelter.

By ERIKA CHAVEZ  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

As Valentine's Day approached, Irvine attorney Mike Carroll began thinking about what to give his wife, Betty.

In past years, gifts included jewelry, pajamas and expensive dinners at top-tier restaurants.

But this year, as they watched the economy crater and layoffs soar locally and nationally, such gifts seemed a little indulgent.

"We thought to ourselves, Valentine's Day is about showing one's heart to another person," said Carroll, who lives in Laguna Niguel and is a regular donor to the Orange County Rescue Mission and its spinoff, Village of Hope. "Why don't we take what money we would have spent on an expensive dinner or a piece of jewelry, and make a donation to the Village of Hope?"

While they're at it, the Carrolls will pack a box full of nonperishable food items

and bring it to the Village of Hope in Tustin, which houses 136 men, women and children as they transition from homelessness to education and employment.

"We call it a love box," Carroll said. "It's a gift of love, of things that are needed."

Officials from shelters and food banks throughout the county reported severe food and donation shortages over the holidays, even as demand for their services grew exponentially. Now the holidays are long gone, but the chronic shortage of food and other supplies to help the needy remains.

At the Village of Hope, officials are grappling with

staggering needs: a shortage of 336 gallons of milk each month. A monthly deficit of 4,810 pounds of produce. And 1,450 pounds of canned vegetables that are necessary to feed the residents.

Officials hope that Orange County residents will follow the Carrolls' lead and create "love boxes" of their own to donate to the Village of Hope. Nonperishable food items are welcome, as are online donations at

[www.rescuemission.org](http://www.rescuemission.org).

As for the Carrolls, they are opting for a home-cooked meal this year: Mike's signature pepper-crusted filet mignon with

asparagus, at a fraction of the price of a restaurant meal.

"I hope other people follow and do something that for many of us isn't a big sacrifice," Carroll said. "You can have a wonderful, romantic evening at home and help the Rescue Mission at the same time."

To donate: Drop off "Love Boxes" at the Village of Hope warehouse, 1 Hope Drive, Tustin, Monday through Saturday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Call 714-247-4300 or visit [www.rescuemission.org](http://www.rescuemission.org) for more information.

### By the numbers

The Orange County Rescue Mission has seen a 55 percent increase in requests for food and housing assistance in the past nine months. Some of the food shortages they are facing each month:

- 336 gallons of milk
- 465 pounds of eggs
- 4,975 pounds of meat
- 2,700 pounds of starch (potatoes, pasta)
- 2,665 pounds of bread
- 4,810 pounds of produce
- 1,450 pounds of canned vegetables

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