

## Believing in serving others, LWV advocate receives Heart & Soul Award

For overcoming personal adversity and inspiring countless others to do the same, Laguna Woods Village resident Denise Welch has been announced as the June 2011 recipient of the O'Connor Mortuary Heart & Soul Award.

Virtually silenced at a young age by a cumbersome speech impediment, Denise Welch has long since accepted her stutter (what the LWV resident now refers to as an 'accent') and gone right on talking. Ironically now a "voice" for seniors as an advocate in her retirement community, Welch has dedicated herself to educating retirees about their capabilities and helping them help themselves.

Created by O'Connor Mortuary, the Heart & Soul Awards program is designed to recognize Orange County citizens for their passion for life and their dedication to making a difference, whether they possess a lifetime of endeavors or for a one-time inspirational achievement. One Orange County citizen is presented the award each month.

"Denise is an ardent believer in herself and in others. 'Can't' is not in her vocabulary, and that kind of positivity is infectious," said Neil O'Connor, President and CEO of O'Connor Mortuary. "She is an inspiration to people of any age, in any stage of life, and so deserving of this award."

After moving to Laguna Woods Village in 1997, and having been inspired by her father's commitment to volunteering with Kiwanis, Welch instantly got involved with a number of organizations and clubs, later founding Kiwanis 737.

Welch developed programs to facilitate networking in the community, edu-



Denise Welch

cate people about everything from upcoming events to Medicare intricacies, and inspire people to get involved. She recently organized a golf clinic for the visually impaired. Serving on many boards and volunteering with numerous clubs and community projects, this 68-year-old philanthropist notably started the "Welcome New Residents" program and "Help a Senior Day," which encourages residents to help each other with simple tasks their neighbors may not be able to accomplish on their own.

"We all have to be advocates for each other, and I like telling people about what they can do," Welch said. "If there are 10 of us holding hands, we are a lot stronger."

As a winner of the Heart & Soul Award, O'Connor Mortuary will present Welch with an official plaque, and a donation will be made in her name to Kiwanis 737.