



# Laura's House receives \$1 million gift, largest direct donation

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After hearing a domestic abuse survivor share her experiences during the 20th anniversary gala of Laura's House, Julia Argyros tore up her half-million dollar check, took the stage and announced that her family's foundation would donate \$1 million to the Ladera Ranch-based nonprofit to help more victims.

"She touched me, and we very much want to be a part of helping many, many more women and children just like her," Argyros said. "We want to truly make a difference."

The gift is the largest direct donation made to Laura's House, Executive Director Margaret Bayston said.

"It was a 20th anniversary gift beyond any of our expectations," she said. "It means so many opportunities."

Laura's House is trying to determine how best to use the unexpected donation, she said. The funds most likely will be used to create low-income housing for women who have experienced abuse, or the nonprofit might open a third resale store or create more satellite offices to reach victims who can't come to the shelter's headquarters, Bayston said.

"They are remarkable," she said of the Argyros family, who has been supporters of the nonprofit for more than a decade. "We're so happy that they chose to share their money with us."

Laguna Hills resident Wayne Pinnell, chairman of Laura's House Board of Directors, said the donation represents about one-third of the nonprofit's annual budget.

"The donation will go a long way to accelerate future growth plans," he said. "It's obviously huge to get that donation and what we'll be able to do with that amount to serve women and children. It's great news."

Since its inception, Laura's House has been a shelter and support for more than 4,000 battered women and children, Bayston said. It has offered counseling, life skills and legal assistance to more than 45,000 people, she said.

"The unfortunate truth is domestic violence is as prevalent as ever, and Laura's House is one of the very few organizations that specializes in forever changing the lives of victims," Argyros said.

"Laura's house has plans to expand its services to create a longer-term transitional facility where clients will have time to heal from their traumatic experiences and receive the education they need to be better parents and role models for their children. This will help break the cycle of domestic violence in our community, and that is something we all want."

More than 350 people, a record attendance, participated in the Oct. 4 anniversary gala. The event, at the Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, which was emceed by Emmy nominee Hetty Chang from NBC4

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Southern California, raised nearly \$1.5 million, including a \$100,000 matching fund from the Joe MacPherson Foundation.

The event was chaired by board member Laura Khouri, and the Honorary Event Chairwoman was Donna Pickup, who co-owns the Balboa Bay Resort with her husband, Dick.

In honor of its anniversary, Laura's House recognized two supporting organizations. The accounting firm Haskell & White LLP, where Pinnell is managing partner, was honored with the Crystal Heart Award for its long-term support. Gibson Dunn received the Legal Leader Award for spearheading the legal services program for Laura's House clients.

The \$1 million donation is not the first time the Argyros family of Newport Beach has touched lives in Orange County. In 2012, it donated \$5 million to Children's Hospital of Orange County to create the first pediatric emergency department in the county, and in 2013 it gave \$2.5 million to Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian in Newport Beach and another \$2.5 million to the Orange County chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.