

# From hard knocks to helping those experiencing homelessness, Gabriel Silva found his passion

Gabriel Silva is a Senior Site Lead for Mercy House working in the city Bridge Shelter.

He grew up in a single parent home and at the age of 5, his father passed away and left his mother to raise eight children.

“Mama did her best but I decided to take the road of hard knocks which lasted into my 30s,” Silva said. “Once I came to my senses I knew I wanted to share my experiences and help others find their way back home if you will.”

In 2015, he began to volunteer with the Salvation Army and eventually was offered a position as an Outreach Coordinator working with the homeless community. He found his passion.

After two years with the Salvation Army, he was hired by City Net to help with the project of relocating people from the Santa Ana River Trail as well as the Santa Ana Civic Center.

Silva has assisted with relocating people from homeless encampments into emergency shelters, transitional living, permanent housing, and connecting them to mental health services, and drug rehabilitation programs.

He later learned about Mercy House and was hired by the nonprofit in November of 2018. He started as a site lead at a new shelter in Santa Ana and then moved to work on the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter in March

“All of my past experiences have brought me to this point and

have prepared me for the service here at the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter in helping the homeless find their way home,” he said. “I am very grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to continuing this service with Mercy House and the City of Costa Mesa.”

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## **Bridge Shelter Success: Derek's Story**

Derek was homeless for three years on the streets of Costa Mesa until he recently made a choice to move into the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter to find daily stability, including food, shower and form a plan to end his homelessness.

City outreach and Bridge Shelter staff worked together and helped Derek realize he needed to live in a place with a lower cost of living. Derek left the Bridge Shelter but continued to work with the outreach team to explore housing options.

With help, Derek made a list of people and places that he felt were good options. He began calling those places and friends to see if anyone had a room to rent that he could move into.

A secure home was found and the paperwork was completed for him to be reconnected to a friend in Wisconsin. Recently Derek called while he was on his way to his new home to say thank you for helping him realize he could not keep living check to check in California.

He is happy to be able to live in a state that he can afford, while having his daily needs met.

The city thanks Trellis for funding Derek's bus ride to his new home and also taking him to the bus depot and seeing him off with a lunch and support.

Through collaborative efforts like these, the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter has successfully facilitated a new lease on life for several clients in a short period of time.

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## **Bridge Shelter Partner Profile: Russ Carter**

Russ Carter first began his involvement with individuals experiencing homelessness in Costa Mesa 14 years ago as part of a small group from Saddleback Church that served breakfast and provided fellowship at the Sandpiper Motel.

Carter became an advocate for one of the men he served breakfast to. That led him to learn more about those experiencing homelessness and their issues, problems, needs and the services available to them. His role quickly evolved from serving meals to advocating for the unsheltered, both individually and as a group.

Carter and the volunteers from Saddleback Church continue to provide meals and support to those in need. However, with the opening of the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter new rules and regulations have been implemented related to volunteers, food service and more.

Despite these new restrictions, Carter and Saddleback Church have adapted their routine and continue to serve a nutritious breakfast that Bridge Shelter clients enjoy and they hope to continue as meal partners with the shelter.

It is partnerships like these that contribute to the overall success at the Bridge Shelter and ensure the shelter successfully changes lives for the better and continues to

make a positive and meaningful impact on the Costa Mesa community.

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## **Bridge Shelter Success: Marty's Story**

Marty, a senior-aged veteran, recently came to the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter following a tumultuous break up with his girlfriend of 10 years. With nowhere else to go and no family in the area, he felt the shelter was his only option for housing.

After moving into the shelter, outreach staff helped Marty contact his family currently residing in a different state. His family urged him to consider moving so he could be nearby and start a new life.

A lack of housing options was not the only thing negatively impacting Marty's life. He was also embroiled in a bitter struggle over possession of his personal belongings. Outreach staff helped Marty establish a court case so he can retrieve his belongings peacefully and without incident prior to moving out of state.

As an added bonus, Marty was also connected to the Veterans Administration and informed he may be eligible for rental assistance.

Once his court issues are resolved, he will be able to reunite with his family and start his new life. In the meantime, he has a comfortable and stable place to reside while he gets his affairs in order.

To learn more about the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter and the city's efforts to assist those in need, please visit [www.costamesaca.gov/homelessness](http://www.costamesaca.gov/homelessness).

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## **STARs Shine Bright for Costa Mesa Television**

CMTV 3- Costa Mesa Television was recently honored with three SCAN NATOA, Inc. Star Awards for excellence in local programming.

This annual video competition features hundreds of entries from cities and regional authority member agencies located within the Southern California and Nevada chapter of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.

CMTV placed in the top three of seven program categories, bringing home first place honors for the documentary on the Sepulveda Adobe, sports coverage of the Vanguard University of Southern California Women's Basketball program, and a Mayor's Award profile on resident Scott Williams and his work with The Freedom Committee of Orange County.



Costa Mesa Television has now been recognized by SCAN NATOA with 21 first place STAR Awards since 1997, including 18 in the past 13 years. Additionally, CMTV 24 has earned numerous second and third place honors in a variety of categories over the years

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## **Fire & Rescue crews to conduct wildland fire training in and around Canyon Park**

Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue will conduct training exercises May 29 to May 30, 2019 and June 10 through June 14, 2019 in and around Canyon Park in preparation for the upcoming wildland fire season. Exercises will occur between 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Fire & Rescue staff wants to ensure the community is aware of the upcoming training and asks residents and park visitors to be mindful of equipment and the day of preparations occurring by fire personnel.

These annual mandatory training exercises take place in Costa Mesa and countywide to help prepare the firefighters for vegetation fires within and outside city limits.

“This annual training is more important than ever, coming off one of the most catastrophic wildfire years in California history,” Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano said. “The new wildland fire season is year round and our professional firefighters continue to be well prepared.”

There will be approximately 10 to 12 fire personnel present for the training and two to three pieces of apparatus (Fire engine, truck, ambulance, or command vehicle) daily. Firefighters will train on a couple of trails in Canyon Park where there is dense vegetation and moderate terrain features.

The training is conducted to promote safety, mitigation, terrain recognition, and area familiarization while focusing on the fundamentals of wildland firefighting.

Moreover, the department is conducting the training with full awareness and sensitivity of all environmental impacts and ensures this training will exclude any live burn training modules.

For questions please contact Captain Joe Noceti, Public Information Officer of Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue at (714) 754-5091.

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## **City Manager Leadership Award for May goes to Senior Planner Mel Lee**

Assistant City Manager Tammy Letourneau presented Senior Planner Mel Lee with the City Manager Leadership Award at the monthly Meet and Greet on Thursday May 23.

“Mel’s quiet professionalism is much appreciated in the Planning Division,” Letourneau said. “As the division recently dealt with staff turnover, he took on difficult projects and helped us with his excellent problem-solving skills and strong work ethic. I am thankful for his leadership and dedication.”

As a Senior Planner, Lee has been responsible for a variety of projects, which included the various master plan approvals at Vanguard University; The Plant in SoBECA; The Triangle; the new Ganahl Lumber, as well as the redevelopment of the old Ganahl site with a new Audi dealership.

He was also responsible for the redevelopment of the Hub on Newport Boulevard, and overseeing the various applications for Medical Marijuana as permitted by Measure X.

While Lee began his tenure in Costa Mesa as an associate planner in 1999, he had previously interned with the city from October of 1985 to January of 1987. He was promoted to senior planner in June of 2015.

Prior to working in Costa Mesa, he worked for the Cities of Commerce and Garden Grove. He holds a bachelor's degree in urban planning from Cal Poly Pomona and he has been a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners – a branch of the American Planning Association – since 1998.

Letourneau also paid tribute to newly hired employees as well as those recently promoted.

Stacy Bennet is the new Administrative Secretary working in the City Clerk's Office. In Parks & Community Services, Sativa Chang and Steven Fajardo have been hired as new Recreation Leader III and Enyelber Franco is new full-time Recreation Coordinator at the Senior Center.

Laura Gomez is the department's new Office Specialist II and Katrine Guernick is a new Recreation Leader II assigned to the ROCKs program.

In the City Manager's Office, Paul Mahoney is a new Community Outreach worker currently working at our Bridge Shelter. In the Police Department, Son Duong is a new Police Records Technician

Those recently promoted include Ann Le, who has been promoted Assistant Planner in the Development Services Department, and Marianna Pena who has been promoted to Assistant Recreation Supervisor working at our Senior Center. In the Police Department, Mariela Soto has been promoted to Community Services Specialist.

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## **Costa Mesa officially opens new Donald Dungan library at Lions Park**

On a bright, sunny morning on Friday May 24, Costa Mesa city leaders officially opened the new Donald Dungan Library at Lions Park, culminating Phase 1 of a \$36.5 million public works project that broke ground in June of 2017.

“Libraries provide for more than just free books,” Mayor Katrina Foley said during the opening ceremonies. “Libraries serve as valuable public institutions that protect the foundation of a civil society. A library is also an investment in the social infrastructure of our community. Investing in the Lions Park Projects and Donald Dungan library is an investment in the physical space that impacts the way people interact.”



The new 23,615-square-foot library was designed by the Southern California-based architectural firm Johnson Favaro and the construction was managed by Costa Mesa's Public Services Department and the Tovey/Shultz construction firm.

Assistant City Manager Tammy Letourneau has served as the project manager for the library for the past five years. She pointed out the library was built on time and on budget.

"To be able to open the doors to the public here for the first time is an honor I will hold dear for the rest of my life," she said.

The LEED Gold constructed building features a main collection with numerous seating and reading areas, a children's collection with interactive play area, a teen space with exclusive amenities, two rooms with advanced audio visual presentation capabilities that can be used for conferences or assemblies, two dedicated study rooms with presentation monitors and a Friends of the Costa Mesa Libraries work room and showcase.



Phase 1 of the project also includes a one-acre park with 25,000 square feet of programmable grass area. The library is named after Donald Dungan, who was Costa Mesa's first city attorney, serving from 1953 to 1966. He was also a Harbor Court judge for 16 years and served on the Newport Harbor High School Board of Trustees.

The original Donald Dungan Library was built in 1986. The facility is owned by the city and library services are provided by Orange County Public Libraries.

Phase 2 will include a revamped Neighborhood Community Center and significant improvements to the Lions Park playground area.

Upon completion of Phase 2, a total of 225 new trees will have been planted in Lions Park.

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**No residential street**

# sweeping next week due to the Memorial Day holiday

Due to the observation of the Memorial Day holiday on Monday, May 27, there will be no residential street sweeping the entire week.

This coincides with the Costa Mesa Sanitary District, which also observes this holiday by pushing trash collection back one day.

This results in residential gutter lines being cluttered with trash cans making it impossible for street sweeper operators to do an efficient job.

Street sweeping will resume back to normal schedule starting the week of June 3.

In lieu of sweeping streets, the following are a list of tasks that clean streets operators will be conducting next week.

- City wide alley street sweeping
- Sweeping of park parking lots and other city owned facilities
- Accident call outs and special request
- Night route sweeping on all arterial streets

For more information, residents can call the city's street sweeping hotline at (714) 327-7471, which has been updated with this information.

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# Bridge Shelter Success: George's Story

There have been a number of success stories originating from the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter, this is George's story.

The Community Outreach team was recently given a client referral of a Costa Mesa man named George who was on the verge of homelessness. The staff, who work daily with individuals experiencing homelessness, learned that George would be homeless within the month because he was in poor and frail health. He could no longer adequately cover his monthly rent expenses solely on his Social Security income, and was running out of time and options.

Outreach staff contacted George to let him know of potential solutions, including the options of moving into a room rental situation or taking in a roommate in his current home. George wanted to stay in his home if possible so the Outreach team asked him what qualities he would like in a roommate. The outreach team worked together with the Bridge Shelter case managers to come up with a list of potential roommates.

George's first choice for a roommate was a younger man who was working and helpful and was staying at the Bridge Shelter. The Outreach team arranged a meeting with both men to meet and talk out the details of rent, utilities, and food. After the meeting, they both said it was a go!

Outreach staff worked with our collaboration partner, Trellis, to assist the shelter client with moving costs. Outreach staff also utilized partner resources to start the new roommates off on the right foot by assisting them with getting their cupboards filled with food for a plentiful start on their new lives.

Both men are happy, helping each other out in daily life and

both are secure in their housing!

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# **Book Plans Now to Celebrate the Opening of New Donald Dungan Library**

The new Donald Dungan Library in Lions Park is set to open on Friday, May 24 immediately following a ribbon-cutting ceremony that starts at 10 a.m. The public is invited to attend the event that will feature formal presentations, light refreshments, live entertainment and more.

In 2017, the City of Costa Mesa broke ground on Phase 1 of the \$36.5 million Lions Park projects, resulting in a new Donald Dungan Library. Phase 2 will include a revamped Neighborhood Community Center and significant improvements to the Lions Park playground area.

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## **Number of trees at Lions Park to more than double by project's completion**

As part of the Lions Park Projects, the city will plant a total of 225 new trees in Lions Park. That number includes a proposal to plant 68 new trees as part of the park's playground improvements. Given that proposed number, which is almost three times the number of existing trees currently in the playground, there will be dense reforestation of the area.

The City's Arborist has recommended some trees for removal because they are either dead or dying, which has caused concerns for some residents.

[Click here to read the arborist's findings and recommendations for removal of 25 trees in the playground.](#)

In addition to the 68 trees planned for the playground, the

city planted 157 trees as part of the Library and Community Center projects for a total of 225 trees. The total trees in place before these projects was 105. Also, the New Zealand Christmas Tree that was planted by the Lions Club will be protected and stay part of this beautiful new park.

City staff is always interested in protecting Costa Mesa's urban forest and is very sensitive to removal of any tree in public right-of-way. Staff carefully evaluates any request for removal of trees and takes necessary steps to mitigate the impact of removal. The City's arborist conducted a detailed inspection of every tree in Lions Park Playground.

Furthermore, instead of planting the standard 24-inch box trees, the city is planting trees between 36 inch to 48 inch box-size to provide immediate benefit of a mature tree.



The completed project will bring a significant benefit to children and residents in the area, reducing issues with falling branches, limbs and tree failures.