

THE RESERVE
AT
RANCHO MISSION VIEJO



Winter 2011

Conservancy Supporters & Patrons:

We would like you to know about some exciting changes which have taken place at the habitat reserve formerly known as The Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy (DOLC).

In 2010, DOLC was renamed the ***Richard & Donna O'Neill Conservancy*** in honor of the late Richard J. O'Neill, Chairman of the Board, Rancho Mission Viejo. Together with his wife Donna, Richard maintained a deep love for Rancho Mission Viejo, its rolling grasslands, deep canyons and flowing creeks.

Also effective in 2010, the County of Orange Board of Supervisors, Rancho Mission Viejo and the San Clemente City Council took action to transfer the DOLC conservation easement to ***The Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo (The Reserve)***. The Reserve is a growing habitat reserve; over time 16,536 acres of Rancho Mission Viejo and other lands will be preserved as open space in perpetuity. These protected lands are part of a comprehensive Habitat Conservation Plan for Southeast Orange County which also includes County parklands and will total more than 32,800 acres.

All of The Reserve lands, including the *Richard & Donna O'Neill Conservancy*, are managed by the ***Rancho Mission Viejo Land Trust***, a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to preserve and enhance Reserve lands for ecological, educational, charitable, conservation, open space, scientific, and recreational uses.

What do these changes mean to DOLC supporters and patrons?

What will not change:

1. All protections to *Richard & Donna O'Neill Conservancy* lands contained in its original easement document still apply.
2. Public education, access and recreation opportunities historically offered by the *Richard & Donna O'Neill Conservancy*—including docent-led activities such as school field trips, astronomy nights, wildflower walks, fitness hikes, sunrise and sunset hikes, seasonal hikes, meditation walks, bird watching, butterfly surveys, Audubon Christmas Bird Count, etc.—will continue.
3. *Richard & Donna O'Neill Conservancy* staff will maintain responsibility for developing these programs.

What will change:

1. Public education, access and recreation opportunities will be expanded into new areas which are part of The Reserve. The Bird Walk and Fall Color Hike held during fall 2010 in the *Ladera*

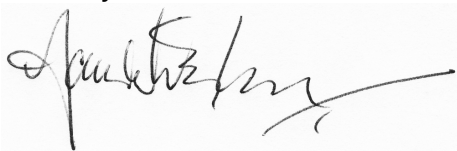
Ranch Open Space are examples of new opportunities for the public to explore and learn more about South County wildlands.

2. Implementation of expanded programs with the same level of professional staffing will necessitate a greatly expanded role for volunteers. To facilitate volunteer partnerships, a new Volunteer Coordinator position has been created, and existing DOLC staff will shift responsibilities and take on new roles:
 - Heidi Keller will assume the title of *Manager, Public Programs*
 - Emily Igarashi will assume the title of *Education Coordinator*
 - Geordie Shaw will assume the title of *Education Coordinator*
 - Michelle Fellner will assume the title of *Volunteer Coordinator*
3. You will be able to offer financial support to The Reserve lands in the form of tax deductible donations to the **Rancho Mission Viejo Land Trust** (Tax ID: 20-5991154).
4. We have created a new mechanism for soliciting public input, a 12-member Community Advisory Council known as ***The Friends of The Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo Commission*** ("Friends Commission"). The *Friends Commission* will provide input to the *Rancho Mission Viejo Land Trust* on public access, education and recreation programs on *The Reserve* lands. *Commission* meetings will be open to the public, though an exact schedule of meetings has not yet been determined.

We are particularly excited about the new community involvement opportunities these changes portend. In view of your past donations, we wish to extend you a special invitation to continue your valued support.

If you have additional questions, comments or suggestions, please contact me at (949) 240-3363 Ext 297.

Sincerely,



Laura Coley Eisenberg
Executive Director/Reserve Manager