

FAMILIES FORWARD

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Families Forward Announces Three New Board Members

Families Forward welcomes two highly-respected professionals from the medical and housing industries and a United States Navy Veteran.

IRVINE, CALIF. (November 12, 2019) – Families Forward announces the appointment of three new members to its Board of Directors, bringing the full slate of officers and board members to 29 for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

Families Forward's three newest Board members are:

- **Nick Meraz – Veteran of the United States Navy and graduate of Families Forward Housing Program**

Nick Meraz is a Veteran of the United States Navy and a graduate of the Families Forward Housing Program. After serving two overseas deployments with the US Navy, Meraz returned home and like many Veterans, struggled with PTSD. After reaching out to Families Forward, Meraz and his family worked with both a Case Manager and a Housing Resource Specialist, who helped them find the home they needed. Meraz is now receiving income from the GI Bill for Veterans and attending college full time. Meraz brings his invaluable experience as both a Veteran and a recipient of Families Forward services to the organization and we could not be more proud to have him join our Board.

- **Victor Cao – Vice President of Public Affairs, California Apartment Association**

Victor Cao has been an advocate for developing affordable housing for more than 10 years. His experience with policymakers and government agencies brings valuable insight regarding the housing crisis in California to the organization. Cao is also actively involved in the local community, with memberships with multiple Chamber of Commerce and Business Councils. Utilizing his passion for addressing the housing crisis and intimate knowledge for institutional processes, Cao looks forward to being part of the strategic planning for Families Forward as we work to create more affordable housing in Orange County.

- **Dr. Vinita Speir – Ob/Gyn, Hoag Memorial Hospital**

Vinita Speir brings a depth of understanding with regards to women's health and the role of families in our community to the Board. Dr. Speir has served the low-income community extensively through her work in health clinics in the most under-served areas of Orange County. An Orange County native with deep ties to the community, Dr. Speir's parents were immigrants and her intimate knowledge of the immigrant experience provides vital awareness for the Families Forward Board as we plan for the future.

“We are thrilled to welcome these three remarkable, new members to our Board of Directors,” stated Madelynn Hirneise, CEO, Families Forward, “Each of them brings such unique and invaluable experience to the organization, and their knowledge of the community, California housing and the client perspective will help guide the strategic vision of Families Forward in the years to come. More affordable housing is needed as is the support of safety net services for currently homeless families in Orange County. As we look to the future, we must continue to expand the availability of realistic housing options as well as provide the opportunity for families to achieve upward economic mobility.”

About Families Forward

Since 1984, Families Forward has worked with families to help them achieve self-sufficiency through housing, food, counseling, career coaching, education, and other support services. Operating with a guiding principal of support with accountability, last year Families Forward improved the lives of nearly 10,000 children and adults by providing safety-net services through the framework of our values: Dignity, Empowerment, Accountability, Community Spirit and Hope. For more information about Families Forward please contact us at 949-379-8325 or visit www.families-forward.org.

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