Orange County Hall of Fame 2026 Class Finalists

Arnold Beckman *(Academics, Innovation and Science)*
Arnold Beckman was an American chemist, inventor, and entrepreneur whose innovations reshaped scientific research throughout the 20th Century. Best known for creating the first commercially successful electronic pH meter and the DU spectrophotometer, he founded Beckman Instruments and played a formative role in advancing biotechnology, chemical analysis and electronics.

Beyond his scientific achievements, he became a major philanthropist, supporting research and education nationwide and establishing institutions such as the Beckman Laser Institute at the University of California, Irvine. His legacy continues through facilities and programs named in his honor, including Arnold O. Beckman High School in Irvine, developments at UC Irvine, and research centers he endowed to advance science, engineering, and medicine.

Ann Meyers Drysdale *(Sports)*
Ann Meyers Drysdale, a groundbreaking athlete and sportscaster, rose to prominence after excelling at Sonora High School, where she lettered in seven sports and earned thirteen MVP awards. She became the first woman to sign a four-year athletic scholarship at UCLA and the first four-time All-American in women's basketball, leading the Bruins to a national championship and recording the first quadruple-double in NCAA history.

A member of the U.S. national team while still in high school, she earned multiple Olympic medals, including helping launch the inaugural USA Women's Olympic Basketball Team. She later became the first woman to sign a contract with an NBA team and went on to become a pioneering NBA and WNBA color analyst, continuing her broadcasting career with the Phoenix Suns, Phoenix Mercury and NBC Sports.

Walter Ehlers *(Civics)*
Walter David Ehlers, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient, exemplified extraordinary courage and lifelong public service. During the D-Day invasion, he led his squad with unwavering determination by destroying enemy positions, rescuing wounded troops, and continuing the fight despite being injured. His heroic actions earned him the nation's highest military honor.

After distinguished service across multiple campaigns, he later made his home in Buena Park, where he worked in veteran support roles and remained a humble advocate for service members, frequently speaking to students and community groups. Remembered for his bravery, modesty and dedication to honoring fellow veterans, Ehlers embodied the ideals of sacrifice and civic duty, leaving an enduring legacy of honor and inspiration.

Frank Garcia *(Philanthropy)*
Frank Garcia began his culinary journey at just 13 years old as a dishwasher in a Texas restaurant, quickly rising to cook and setting the foundation for a lifelong legacy in the food industry. Together with his wife, Silvia, he opened the first La Casa Garcia in Anaheim's

Leatrice neighborhood before relocating to its long-time home on Chapman Avenue, where the restaurant has thrived for over four decades.

Throughout his 40 years in the business, Garcia has served countless celebrities, including John Wayne and Frank Sinatra, and played an influential role in shaping restaurant culture and inspiring new chains across Southern California. His enduring dedication to community service has earned him numerous honors, such as the 1996 U.S. President's Hero Award and the OCHCC Annual Estrella Award, along with widespread recognition for his annual WE GIVE THANKS Thanksgiving event, which has provided free holiday meals to more than 10,000 people at the Honda Center.

Dexter Holland *(Music, Arts & Entertainment)*
Dexter Holland is an American musician, best known as the co-founder, lead vocalist, rhythm guitarist, main songwriter and composer, and only constant member of the punk rock band, the Offspring. He co-founded the record label Nitro Records, sold in 2013, with former bandmate Greg K. and also holds a PhD in molecular biology. Holland was a doctoral student at the Laboratory of Viral Oncology and Proteomics Research, Keck School of Medicine.

He acquired the nickname "Dexter" for his academic prowess, taken from the slang term "Poindexter." In 2004, Holland launched his own brand of hot sauce called Gringo Bandito. It has sold over a million bottles and is available in over 500 restaurants and 7,000 stores, including being a top-ranked hot sauce on Amazon.

In 1997, Holland and former Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra teamed up to form the FSU Foundation, which raised funds through charity concerts. The foundation organized benefit shows to raise money for various charities including AIDS Project Los Angeles, Poor People's United Fund, Trees Foundation, and Amnesty International."

Tony Lam *(Civics)*
Tony Lam became the first Vietnamese American elected official in the country when he won a seat on the Westminster City Council in 1992 and served for decade. Tony was also a founding member of the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce.

Tony fled South Vietnam during the Fall of Saigon and helped 125,000 fellow refugees living in American camps by creating spaces for worship, organizing activities for children, and maintaining order during daily disruptions. Back home, Tony owned three companies, but he had to start over in Orange County, working at a gas station before helping to develop Little Saigon into the bustling Vietnamese center of today.

Tony owned the family restaurant Vien Dong Restaurant in Garden Grove for 20 years and retired to concentrate more time on community events.

He assisted in developing the look of Little Saigon, such as the lampposts and the architecture of many buildings. This included the Asian Garden Mall by bringing together restaurants and merchants in what would become the area's biggest cultural center.

Tony Lam is a true inspiration and mentor for others to follow in his footsteps.

Justice Eileen Moore (Civics)
Justice Eileen Moore was appointed to the Superior Court of California, County of Orange, in 1989 and to the Fourth District Court of Appeal in 2000. For the last 28 years, Justice Moore has been an author for the Thomson West Civil Practice texts on Procedure. She has also served as author of the Litigation Update for the California Lawyers Association's Litigation Section for the last 12 years.

Prior to her appointment, Justice Moore built a legal career in private practice in Newport Beach. She also practiced as a registered nurse, including service as a combat nurse with the Army Nurse Corps in Vietnam. She is a life member of Vietnam Veterans of America.

In addition to her judicial position, Justice Moore has spent the past 25 years in support of veterans, particularly those who interact with the courts and the justice system. Since 2008, she has chaired the Judicial Council's Veterans and Military Families subcommittee. She has authored more than 100 articles on veterans' legal issues and is also the author of two books.

Frank and Joan Randall *(Philanthropy)*
Frank (deceased) and Joan Randall are prominent Newport Beach philanthropists who built a multi-million-dollar fortune through real estate development and stock investments and donated more than $100 million to fund major environmental preservation projects across Southern California.

They gave $50 million to help the Banning Ranch Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land buy a 387-acre former oil field between Newport Beach and Costa Mesa. This coastal property is being turned into a public park and nature preserve to protect endangered species and local wetlands.

Also, they donated $50 million to The Nature Conservancy to help create a massive 72,000-acre wildlife preserve connecting the Sierra Nevada with other wildlands, called the Tehachapi Mountains Preserve. This is the largest nature preserve in California.

Suavecito: Alberto and David Vargas *(Business)*
Suavecito was co-founded in 2008 by Alberto and David Vargas, along with their neighborhood friend J-Bird (i.e., Jason Bird), who, driven by their love for hairstyling, decided to fill a gap in the market for quality pomades. Their journey started in a garage, where they experimented with various formulas to create the perfect styling product. This hands-on approach was key to developing a brand that resonated with their customers.

The founders' backgrounds in the beauty and grooming industry played a crucial role in shaping the brand's identity. Leveraging their expertise, they focused not just on the product's formulation but also on the overall customer experience, which set Suavecito apart from its competitors.

John Wayne *(Music, Arts & Entertainment)*
John Wayne, born Marion Robert Morrison on May 26, 1907, in Winterset, Iowa, became one of

the most iconic figures in American cinema, famed for embodying the strong, rugged persona of the classic Western hero.

After moving to Southern California as a child, he transitioned from college football to film work, eventually earning his first leading role in The Big Trail (1930). His breakthrough came with Stagecoach (1939), launching a prolific career that spanned nearly 250 films across five decades.

Known as “The Duke,” Wayne became a top box-office draw and starred in enduring classics such as *Red River*, *The Searchers*, *Rio Bravo*, *The Quiet Man*, and *True Grit*, the last of which earned him an Academy Award.

Beyond his legendary film career, Wayne developed a deep and lasting connection to Orange County, California, where he lived in Newport Beach from 1965 until his death in 1979.

His influence on the region remains unmistakable: Orange County renamed its airport in his honor, creating John Wayne Airport, the only commercial airport in the United States named after an actor.