

# Lyon Academy

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adults in Orange County. Long a focus for the Lyon family's philanthropic efforts, its Santa Ana facility opened in 1985, and has served tens of thousands of youth since.

"Orangewood is always looking to address the needs of our youth and develop sustainable programs in their path to adulthood," said Orangewood Chief Executive Officer **Chris Simonsen**.

The foundation does this by creating life skills and education programs for about 1,500 teens and young adults per year, through programs such as the **Samueli Academy**, a free public charter high school established by **Henry and Susan Samueli**, Orangewood Foundation and **Sandi Jackson** in 2013.

Historically, Orangewood's programs have helped two main cohorts: kids on the college track, or those struggling with homelessness and in need of hourly jobs to get back on their feet.

"We noticed an underrepresented group of young individuals that are doing okay, but an hourly job won't sustain them long term, and they're not college-bound either," Simonsen said.

## Lyon Living Involvement

Orangewood Chief Program Officer, **Shauntina Sorrells**, worked with a graduate student at **California State University, Long Beach** to compile research for a new

workforce development program that could offer vocational training for this middle group.

They came up with an 80-page framework for the program that drew inspiration from other successful area programs, such as **Casa Teresa's** internship platform for at-risk mothers.

"We came up with a great blueprint for the program, but we didn't have any funding sources at the time," Simonsen said.

Frequent Orangewood partner and **Lyon Living** co-founder, **Frank Suryan**, was aware of this need, and approached the Lyon family with the concept.

In 1989, Suryan partnered with Gen. Lyon to form a multifamily real estate company that's now known as **Lyon Living**; it counts a portfolio valued in the billions of dollars.

**Bill H. Lyon** previously served as CEO and executive chairman of **William Lyon Homes**, which sold last year to **Scottsdale's Taylor Morrison Home Corp.** (NYSE: TMHC); he's now on the nearly \$4.5 billion-valued company's board.

## \$1M Seed Funding

It wasn't the first time the Lyon family helped to establish a new Orangewood program.

Gen. Lyon and his wife, **Willa Dean**, began their association with the nonprofit in the 1970s, when they donated a decorated Christmas tree to the then **Albert Sitton Home**, which was renamed **Orangewood** when it was later expanded into a campus in Orange for battered and abused children.

Lyon helped establish the new center by putting together a board of 14 people in 1980 to fund the private donation need of \$8.5 million for the center that opened in 1985.

Suryan and the Lyon family together donated \$1 million in total to fund the start of



**Bill H. Lyon**  
Director  
Taylor Morrison Home



**Frank Suryan Jr.**  
Chairman, CEO  
Lyon Living

the General **William Lyon Workforce Academy**, which now has two full-time staff members.

## Early Success

The program is currently in a soft launch; two individuals have been paired with two Orange County companies: **A-Tech Consulting and Motive Energy**.

**Cassandra Williams**, CEO of Orange-based environmental consultancy **A-Tech**, signed on as an early partner largely due to a personal interest in the program.

"I was in and out of foster care myself," Williams said. "I was married young and had children young, so I understand how hard it can be to get on your feet financially and establish a career."

The program has been a resounding "win-win," said Williams—after just two months **A-Tech** promoted the apprentice to work on a project as a full-time employee.

"We've helped to train her, but she has put in the drive and hard work to handle the rest on her own," Williams said.

"The program is a very synergistic idea that supports youth in the community but also provides companies with opportunities to feel like a tribe," she said. "I've noticed my team really buy into the program and come together to help out in a meaningful way."

## Construction Focus

Orangewood is scouting about eight to 10 youths for the first official class of the Lyon academy. Individuals are expected to be between 18 and 25 years old, and they don't have to be existing Orangewood participants to sign on to the program.

"We are also working with the County of Orange's social service department as well as other nonprofits in the area to see if they have referrals for participants," Simonsen said.

These individuals will then shadow at several different companies before landing on the best fit for all involved.

The program is currently seeking partners in local construction companies and will expand to other industries as the program progresses.

"Not only do we have fantastic existing partners in the construction industry, it's also an industry that's facing a significant need for skilled labor," said Simonsen. "These are also solid trade jobs that can provide a livable wage."

Frequent construction partners for Orangewood include **Lennar**, **Lyon Living** and **Snyder Langston**.

## Call for Sponsors

In addition to seeking company participants, Orangewood is looking for more financial partners to support the **Workforce Academy**.

It's looking to build up an endowment fund between \$4 million and \$5 million to support the operations of the program, which includes staffing, youth supplies, training costs and incentives for youths as they progress through the program.

A Orangewood donor recently agreed to match donations up to half a million dollars.

"This program couldn't have come at a better time," said **Bill H. Lyon**.

"Between the need in the community for trade programs and the demand for skilled labor, this academy connects all the dots." ■

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**General William Lyon Workforce Academy**

- **FOUNDED:** 2021
- **PURPOSE:** Orangewood-backed program that pairs OC young adults with local construction companies, and other businesses to help secure paid internships
- **FUNDING:** \$1M donation from Lyon family and Frank Suryan Jr.; goal of \$5M endowment
- **NOTABLE:** focus on construction industry to help with labor shortages

# Burnham

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## Big Box Swaps

Amazon's space previously held an **Office-Max**. It's set to be the fourth grocery store of its type in OC.

An Amazon Fresh site at the Irvine **Market Place**, also just off the 5 freeway, was the concept's first location in the county and opened about a year ago. It's at a former **Babies R Us** site.

A Fullerton spot for the grocer previously holding a **Toys R Us** store along Harbor Boulevard has also opened, and in July the company announced plans for a location along Imperial Highway in La Habra.

As of this summer, there were 18 doors open for the grocer nationwide.

Most stores run between 30,000 square feet and 40,000 square feet.

Also coming to The Gateway: **Pirch**, the up-scale kitchen, bath and outdoor goods retailer.



It'll be the second spot for the chain in OC; **Pirch's** other area location is at the Burnham-developed **SOCO** project along the 405 freeway in Costa Mesa.

## Active Sector

The leasing success for **The Gateway** shows there's plenty of interest for certain types of big-box anchored retail centers, if the properties are modern and in good locations, according to **Scott Burnham**, who runs **Burnham Ward** alongside business partner **Bryon Ward**, and who also owns and operates real estate affiliate **Burnham USA Equities**.

"We remain busy in retail," Burnham said. "We're in deep."

To that point, an affiliate of **Burnham USA** recently picked up another big-box retail site in the city of Orange.

The nearly 5-acre site is along **North Tustin Avenue**, just off the **Costa Mesa (55) Freeway**, and has long been home to a **Best Buy** store running about 46,000 square feet.

**Burnham Equities** paid **El Segundo-based Continental Development Corp.** close to \$23 million for the property, according to property records.

It's a return home for the buyer. **Continental** paid **Burnham** \$22.1 million for the site across the street from a **Walmart** in 2012.

**Scott Burnham** said the plan is to operate the site as is for the time being, but that redevelopment is possible down the line. The site counts a large surface parking lot, in addition to the **Best Buy**.

His companies have owned several **Best Buy**-occupied stores over the years, including one on **Chapman Avenue** in Orange. ■

**Burnham Ward Properties** B W P

- **FOUNDED:** 2004
- **PARTNERS:** Scott Burnham, Bryon Ward, Stephen Thorp
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Newport Beach
- **BUSINESS:** real estate developer, investor
- **PROPERTIES:** Castaway Commons (Newport Beach), Long Beach Exchange, South Coast Collection, others
- **NOTABLE:** revamped Mission Viejo center, bought in 2020, lands Amazon Fresh as anchor tenant