

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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truelife



PHOTOS: LEONARD ORTIZ, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Lauri Burns, center, who runs the nonprofit The Teen Project, is shown with six of the foster girls who are currently living or have in the past lived in Burns' Mission Viejo foster home. Pictured, left to right, Shannon Buhrmaster, 30, Yvonne McDonald, 20, Kaylee Woods, 19, Lauri Burns, Chelsea Roberts, 17, Sarah Brar, 22, and Ashley Moody, 18, who doesn't live at the home but is being placed in a Teen Project home.

Embracing the group

Abuse survivor Lauri Burns finds that she can expand her outreach to teens by leading a nonprofit organization.

By LAURI BURNS
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

I was born in New York and grew up in a middle-class Jewish home on Long Island. Although my family looked normal on the outside, there was abuse from as far back as I could remember. My understanding of God as a small child was that he was punishing me for something I did in a past life.

My introduction to intravenous drugs was a welcome reprieve to block the memories. At 18, I was released from the juvenile justice



Burns plays with McDonald's son, Skler Springer. As a teenager, Burns was a homeless drug addict with a child.