

From Covered Wagons to the Internet

The primary function of a Welcome Service remains constant...welcoming newcomers to an established community. How that function is performed has evolved along with our demographics, technology and culture: Initially, weary frontier travelers rolling West were often greeted by settlers who likely had made a similar journey earlier. Established settlements helped those going further west with baskets of food, while also welcoming those who chose to stay in the area.

From this simple beginning, the practice of welcoming the new residents evolved in the 1950's as service men and women returning from WWII, entered schools with the help of the GI Bill and started families. The housing market "went through the roof" as the WWII generation spawned the boomer generation. During this time, it was not uncommon for "welcome ladies" with their pillbox hats and white gloves to visit new residents, share a cup of coffee or tea with the lady of the house and familiarize the new family with their local surroundings. Local businesses often added value to the visit by providing small gifts or business cards to the welcome ladies for distribution to the newcomers.

Today, newcomers still appreciate the role of a Welcome Service, but life in the 21st century has changed how that role is perceived — especially in Orange County. Dual income parents, children's school / social schedules and commutes coupled with all that Orange County has to offer leaves little time for mid-day coffee socials! In lieu of the "welcome ladies," Welcome Express caters to new residents in several ways: 1) By distributing civic information about their new community and gifts from various sponsor businesses in their area via a mailed welcome package. 2) Orange County has one of the highest per-capita household computer ownership rates in the country. Welcome Express takes advantage of this fact by providing a comprehensive Online Resource Center offering newcomers additional information to facilitate their immersion into the Orange County lifestyle.

Orange County has experienced many significant changes in the last 20 years, with many more to come. We have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to welcome new Orange County residents on behalf of local business and civic organizations these last 20 years and look forward to doing so for another 20 years!