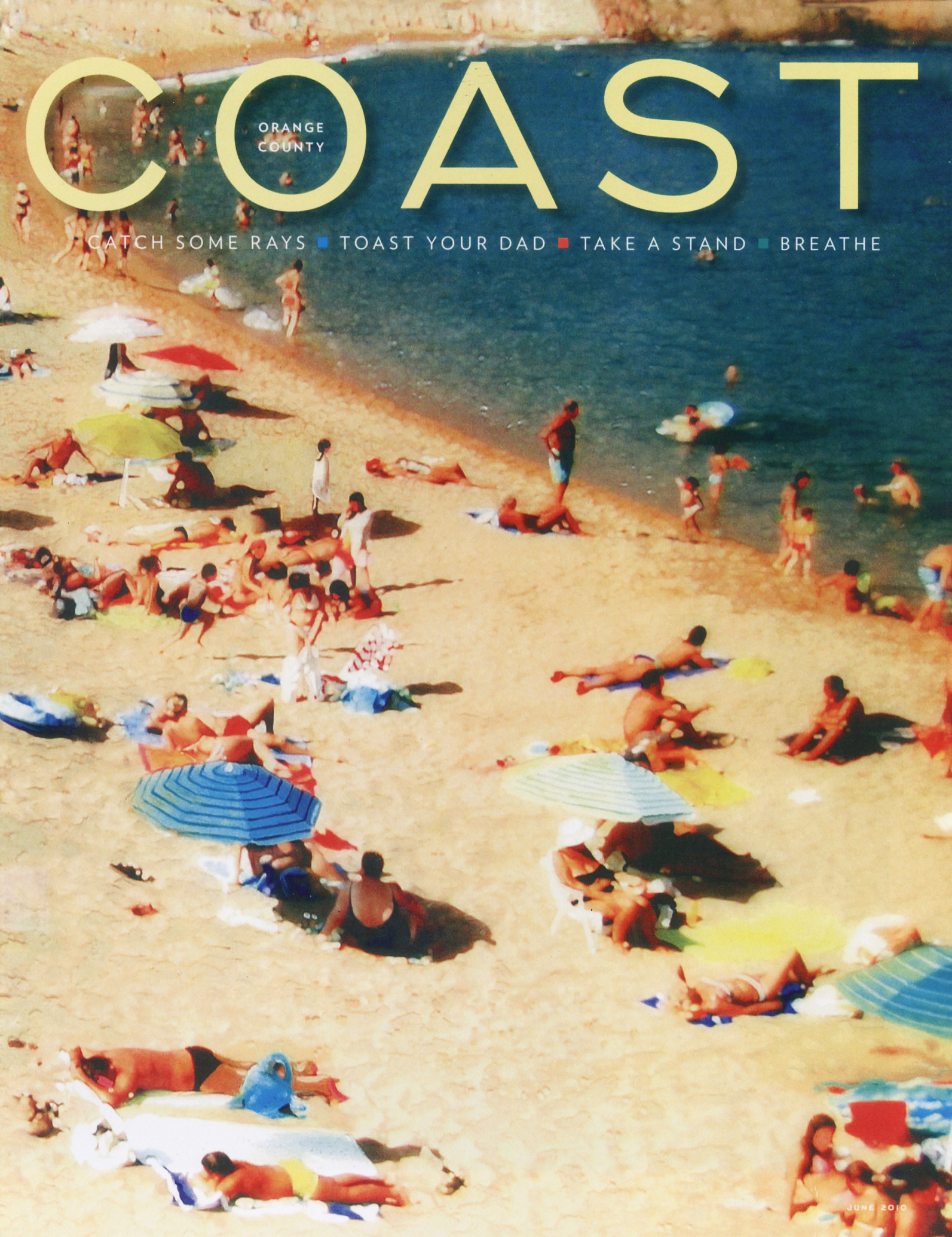


# COAST

ORANGE  
COUNTY

CATCH SOME RAYS ■ TOAST YOUR DAD ■ TAKE A STAND ■ BREATHE





# WYLIE AITKEN

PHILANTHROPIST AND CIVIL TRIAL LAWYER

**WYLIE AITKEN**  
HAS NEVER BEEN  
ONE TO SHY AWAY  
FROM A GOOD  
CAUSE, NO MATTER  
HOW BAD THE  
ODDS ARE AGAINST  
HIM. HE'S A  
FIGHTER, USUALLY  
FOR THE LITTLE  
GUY, USUALLY  
AGAINST A BIGGER  
GUY. OFTEN  
HE REPRESENTS  
INDIVIDUALS  
OR FAMILIES  
SEEKING JUSTICE  
FROM HUGE  
CORPORATIONS  
- ONE ATTORNEY  
AGAINST A FLOOR  
OF THEM. BUT HE  
THRIVES ON IT, AND  
SPEAKING WITH  
THE DYNAMIC,  
OUTSPOKEN MAN  
FOR FIVE MINUTES  
TELLS YOU THAT.

His passion for "fighting the good fight," as he puts it, also extends outside the courtroom. A big part is championing the arts and arts education. He has served three three-year terms on the board of South Coast Repertory and is its current board president, charged with the daunting task of finding replacements for SCR's retiring founders and directors Martin Benson and David Emmes. Orange County residents since 1955, he and his wife Bette also support myriad other causes, from donating millions to law schools such as Chapman University's (enough to create the Wylie A. Aitken Trial Courtroom at Chapman) and Marquette University (to which they recently donated \$2 million) to the KOCE Foundation, Laura's House, Oceana, Ryan's Reach, the Salvation Army... the list is truly too long to include everything.

As you'd expect, Aitken is not shy about his politics, either, serving as the chairman

of the Democratic Foundation of Orange County from 1992 to just last year. But he's also anything but blindly partisan and can't stand those who are. Hence, it was no surprise when Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently appointed Aitken to the California Arts Council, the state arts agency's governing board for a four-year term. And with the state in unprecedented financial trouble and the Arts Commission running on fumes, Aitken has his work cut out for him. But then, that's probably why he got the post in the first place - it needs a fighter who's used to being the underdog. After all, who better to ask than an Orange County Democrat?

"I guess if I did nothing else but went around to every hill top and screamed the fact that California is dead last in the nation in supporting the arts, maybe that will at least do something good," he jokes. But don't put it past him. One could see him doing just that.

## SAVE THE ARTS

■ Who doesn't want to help the next Mozart or Shakespeare, or even just help a kid stay in school? Fortunately, there are any number of ways to support the arts.

**BUY SOME ART.** No, not for your living room, for the community. Most theaters and concert halls operate on a financial tightwire, so every dollar counts. Pick a theater in your neighborhood and donate a few bucks. It makes a bigger difference than you think.

**GET OUT MORE.** The fact is, out of three million OC residents, if only 500 a night went to SCR, every performance would be sold out. That would mean they'd get to do even more great work. So the next time you're thinking of going to see *Alvin and the Chipmunks 2: The Squeakquel*, buy a ticket to the theater instead. You'll be glad you did, especially at intermission, when a nice glass of Merlot is less expensive than a tub of Coke.

**WRITE A LETTER.** Don't have a lot of extra money? Write a letter to your board of education, state representative and/or the governor about the importance of arts in schools. After all, how are our kids going to pay for all those government bailouts without a strong, well-rounded education?