

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER



2015's game changers in Orange County

HEALTH

JIM MCALEER

Age: 50

Job: chief executive, Alzheimer's Orange County

Bio: McAleer has been CEO of Alzheimer's Orange County since 2004, overseeing an organization that has an annual budget of \$5 million. The Mission Viejo resident previously worked as a consultant to nonprofits, helping raise money and organize fundraisers.

Why he's an influencer: In December, McAleer led his group's split from the national Alzheimer's Association, setting up Alzheimer's Orange County as an independent entity. He expects the change will help maintain local control of programs and funds, and lead to more services for the estimated 84,000 Alzheimer's patients who live in Orange County.

Biggest challenge: Alzheimer's Orange County strives to address the individual needs and experiences of each patient, family member and donor.

Work philosophy: "I hired great people and I don't tell them how to do their jobs. We set goals and then I get out of their way. At an event, I need to be one of the last ones to leave. You have to work like it's your own business and baby."

Thoughts on the aging population: More efforts are needed to help keep seniors healthy, including through diet and exercise, he says. "We focus on children, puppies and the homeless - very important things - but we don't focus enough on seniors."

Inspirations: McAleer says he is impressed by his 17-year-old son and families living with Alzheimer's who go through unimaginably tough times with "grace, dignity and style."

Not on your résumé, but helps explain



STEVEN GEORGES, FILE PHOTO

Jim McAleer has been CEO of Alzheimer's Orange County since 2004.

what drives you: His parents, who live in Savannah, Ga., raised him to give back as "part of your culture, part of your nature," he says. He began volunteering in college by teaching choir to intellectually disabled adults.

Next big thing for 2016: McAleer seeks aggressive growth for the nonprofit to serve more people and raise more money. "We will be everywhere," he says.

- Courtney Perkes

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I'm no Mother Theresa, don't get me wrong, I'm a selfish son of a gun. But I do believe if you spend your time trying to improve other people's lives, the higher your quality of life is."