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**“Recession or No Recession” Building Industry Association  
Members Step Up to Help BITA Student in Need**

***Orange County  
Chapter***

IRVINE, CA - Leo Cortez never really enjoyed high school until he enrolled in the Building Industry Technology Academy (BITA) program at Western High School in Anaheim, CA. BITA was developed by the Building Industry Association of Orange County as a four-year high school program that exposes young people to diverse career paths within the building industry. His instructor Jerry Cates introduced him to a variety of construction trades and soon he began dreaming of becoming a successful electrician. After graduation Leo was accepted to the Los Angeles Trade Technology Academy for the Fall semester. His dreams were put in jeopardy when he realized his classes required a long list of expensive tools. The recession has made it difficult for him to find a job, and with his mother disabled, he relied on scholarships to support his education. When those funds dried up, BITA instructor Jerry Cates immediately took him shopping for the basic tools to get started.

In September, Leo contacted the Building Industry Association of Orange County (BIA/OC) hoping to receive a donation of second hand tools. When Greg Armbruster, Business Manager at RSI, Professional Cabinet Solutions heard about his situation he stepped up and offered to buy remaining tools on the list. He met Leo at the Lowes in Rancho Cucamonga with his two children Ava and Jakob in tow.

“At our church we talk a lot about giving back. I thought this would be a great teaching opportunity for Ava and Jakob to learn an important life lesson,” said Armbruster. “They have done chores around the house to be able to contribute. In times like these it’s more important than ever to continue to give back, so often people like Leo Cortez can slip through the cracks.”

“I’m very thankful for the generous support I’ve received,” Cortez said. “I’m looking forward to finishing school and accomplishing my goal of becoming an

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electrician. I hope that one day I can return the favor to those in need.”

The California state budget crisis has resulted in decreased education funds for woodshop, construction technology, and many other vocational classes on high school campuses. The unique opportunities offered through BITA also benefit Special Education and at-risk/under-achieving students through the program’s high level of applied hands-on learning. BITA program is currently in place at Katella, Western, Anaheim, Valencia, and Brea-Olinda High Schools in Orange County, CA. Recently, the Building Industry Association of Orange County (BIA/OC) raised over \$30,000 for the BITA program through the annual “Wine Safari in the City” benefit at the new Children’s Museum Pretend City in Irvine, CA. To donate to the BITA program, please contact Jill Cagle at 949-553-9500 or visit [www.biaoc.com/outreach](http://www.biaoc.com/outreach).

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The Orange County Chapter of the Building Industry Association of Southern California (BIA/OC) is a non-profit trade association representing nearly 1,000 companies employing over 100,000 people affiliated with the home building industry. The BIA/OC mission is to promote proactive participation in the development of economic and community issues in Orange County. The BIA/OC is affiliated with the California BIA and the National Association of Home Builders.

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