



The **GOOD NEWS** Letter

*Celebrating the families, volunteers and staff of the
Winter Nights Family Shelter*

FEBRUARY – 2021

Half Way through Season # 17

It's hard to believe, but Winter Nights is half way through this year's shelter schedule, and at the start of the 3-month Safe Parking Program schedule.

"When I was in another shelter it felt like jail. Shelters should be like here: kind and caring staff members. I can say anything to anybody and I'm heard. You cannot say that about other shelters. I was also at the drop-in CORE shelter when my daughter was 16 months old and they gave mothers with babies a separate room and we were warm and safe but not treated like here. When I was at work one day this week something happened and I thought, "I can't wait to share it with Kathleen and the staff when I get back!" It is a good feeling here."

~Mother with a toddler at the shelter

Sheltering Families



This past Monday the Shelter moved to the fifth 4-week host site in the rotation, **Walnut Creek Friends Church**. Everyone is now settled in and loves it. There is a play area on site and it is just across from a large park. Wonderful!



Many thanks to everyone at **Walnut Creek United Methodist Church**, (Judith Hall, coordinator) who hosted Winter Nights families for the past 4 weeks, and the coordinators and congregations who assisted them by providing "Covid-Style" meal deliveries and special activities: **St. Mary's Church of Immaculate Conception – Walnut Creek** (Stephanie Baker, coordinator), **St. Mathew's Lutheran Church – Walnut Creek** (Craig Cole, coordinator) and **Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church** (Robin Freeberg coordinator)

Housing Families

With four months to go we are hard at work seeking housing for this year's families. Available housing is always scarce. Covid has made it worse. Our families want and need sustainable housing. The term "sustainable" is a specific term that means a family has a lease in their name and the income to support their family and pay the rent. An uphill climb for many of our families, especially now.

Parents work with WN managers to understand what they need to do, and how to get it done to be ready and/or eligible for any stable housing opportunities that arise. They work on everything from employment to life skills like budgeting.

Our managers also advocate with agencies and programs and help each family connect with the ones they qualify for. Many county offices and other agencies remain closed, slowing the process of applying and interviewing for housing.

Staff Vaccine Update:

Each of our incredible WN Shelter staff and managers have received both doses of their Coronavirus vaccine! And the Safe Parking Program staff are almost there, too. Hallelujah!



Teri Lundvall and Kathleen Garcia, Program Managers

The SAFE PARKING PROGRAM is OPEN



The Winter Nights Safe Parking Program opened February 1st for homeless individuals, couples and families living in their cars. It is located in Pittsburg and operates from 8 pm – 6 am daily. We can accept 6-8 cars but RV's cannot be accommodated at this time. The program includes staff supervised overnight parking, breakfast, bathrooms, evening snacks, and access to showers at the Winter Nights' Oasis Day Center. Client services are provided by managers to assist participants who want more help. If you would like more information call Bill Shaw at 925-435-2074.

NEWS FROM THE SHELTER

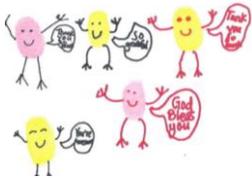


A Job!

Do you remember how excited you were getting your first job? A teen in the shelter is so excited. She got a job! She will be working at a natural and organic food grocery, and her training has begun. Good luck from all of us at Winter Nights.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

There was a very happy two-year old girl at her birthday party this month. Time to celebrate! A cake, decorations, balloons and presents (of course!). Happy Birthday! Our thanks to Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church who provided everything for the celebration.



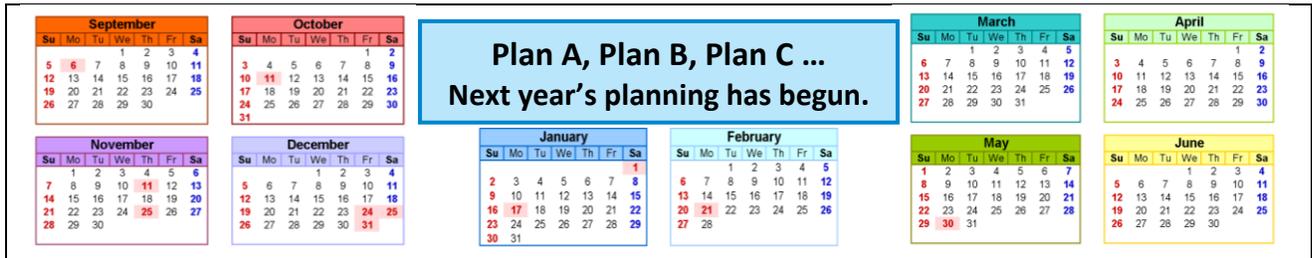
Thank You cards by the kids themselves

Kids love to draw. We love to say, "Thank You". So, we started a Thank You Card project. The kids of all ages draw. Then they help make Winter Nights Thank You cards out of their creations. We can't wait to use them!

A note from a family who found stable housing last year

Oh my goodness, we miss you all so much! You are constantly in our thoughts and prayers. I cannot even begin to tell you how much you guys have helped to change our lives. All in all, we are doing fantastic and are thankful for this second shot in life. The biggest thing about being on our own now is definitely taking ownership of all the responsibilities that we have and taking what we learned from our previous hardships and applying our newfound techniques from Winter Nights for bettering ourselves. We pray that it will be a program that lives on forever and continues to bless others the way it did for us.

Mother & father with 4 children 2019/2020



Next Shelter Season: Plan A, Plan B, Plan C

Next year will be Winter Nights' 18th season serving homeless families and the shelter will probably still be operating in the shadow of the coronavirus pandemic. We are optimistic and hope for the best but will plan for as many alternative scenarios as we possibly can.

In early February, Winter Nights Executive Director, Judy Stillman and Program Director, Bill Shaw, invited congregations to meet on Zoom to discuss next year's shelter season, September 2021 – June 2022.

Everyone shared the uncertainties they face and availability of their site, such as the pros and cons of 4-week stays, the opening of congregations for services and community use, congregation's pre-schools, county regulations for social distancing or shelter-in-place, and the end of county motel programs in June. A great discussion and good start.

Judy and Bill will begin penciling in alternative shelter strategies for various scenarios to share:

- Do we stay a month at a time, or can we move every 2-weeks?
- Will there be social distancing requiring larger spaces and limiting client capacity?
- Will we be sheltered-in-place or will clients leave during the day as in a normal season?
- Will public schools fully open for the kids? Can we bring back the tutors?
- Can volunteers return to prepare meals on-site versus purchased from licensed kitchens?
- Will the circumstances be the "same" all season long, or will the county open and close like the past 10 months? Could the first 3-4 months operate differently than the last 6-7?

Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D ...or more with the help of our incredible congregations and community partners.

Our strength is our ability to meet the changing needs of the growing population of homeless families in Contra Costa County. Each family's circumstances are different, and it is our goal to work with each of them to provide support and services that address their particular needs and assist them toward stable and affordable housing.
~ Bill Shaw, Program Director

Under Covid-19 Protocols
Winter Nights Family Shelter is currently full and is serving
 4 families * 11 guests * 5 parents & 6 of their children
 6 girls, 0 boys * Ages 5 months, 2, 2, 3, 14 and 18 years old

Safe Parking Program
 Three steady participants with others who come and go as needed.

Offering hope, One Winter Night at a time.
 Your support helps rebuild the lives of families and individuals. Thank you.
 Checks can be made out to
Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc
 and sent to: **Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc ·404 Gregory Lane, #7 ·Pleasant Hill, CA ·94523**
Online donations can be made through this link: [DONATE](#)

Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, public benefit corporation
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