



The GOOD NEWS Letter

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

APRIL - 2021

Easter at Orinda Community Church.

The Easter bunny hid the eggs and filled baskets with goodies for all. What fun!



Lots is Happening at Winter Nights

It just doesn't slow down.

- There has been some turnover of families at the **Shelter**. Winter Nights helped one family move to Bay Area Rescue Mission's long-term shelter. A new family has joined the program with a 9-year old child. Welcome!
- **Housing opportunities** remain very scarce as California's Project Roomkey and Housekey end and clients receive priority in receiving available housing. We continue to work with our families to creatively look for housing. One mother is working and saving to buy a used RV for she and her daughter. Rental in an RV park is significantly less than apartment rental and may have better availability.
- The **Safe Parking Program** is a huge success after a slow start in February. The word has spread. SPP is at capacity most nights serving individuals and families living in their cars. The need is strong, and our partner, Church of the Nazarene in Pittsburg, has agreed to let us stay an additional month. SPP will extend operations through the end of May. **See our Facebook page for a note from a participant.**
- **Continued Success** is a gift to so many of our alumni families. Over 40 families have been contacted, 9 have receives some type of assistance or referrals, and we know that financial support for rent has kept 2 families from potential eviction.
- **Oasis Day Center** is open twice a week for showering by SPP clients and client support services.
- **Thank goodness for our amazing staff and managers.** They have stepped up to cover extra shifts, on different days, at short notice. One of our managers was in a car accident and needed to take a few days off. Then her son was hospitalized for surgery. Another staff member left, requiring rescheduling coverage.
- **Thank goodness for our amazing grant writers.** Funding has been a concern this year and we want to thank Jo Kerner and Stephanie Baker, our dedicated volunteer grant writers, for their steady and expert work in keeping the funds flowing.
- **Thank goodness** for every individual donor and so many congregations for donating as well.
- **Thank goodness for our congregations and community partners** for their commitment of facilities, meals and special activities under the unusual Covid protocols. You are amazing and so appreciated! Judy Stillman, has already started work with our host partners on a schedule for next season. Plan A. If Covid restrictions for congregate living shelters are eased, then the plan is to "go back to normal". Two week stays at one site and no shelter-in-place restriction. Plan B? Time, and county Covid protocols, will tell.

Shelter Families' Thoughts this Season

From Jo Kerner, Winter Nights volunteer Grant Writer and Client Interviewer

Because of Covid, families have to stay within the shelter and grounds of the congregation, with trained staff, 24-7. Family interviews illuminated some advantages to the intense attention each family received as a consequence. And because the four families in the shelter had been in other shelters before Winter Nights (all had been homeless for at least two years, and one for five years), they appreciated these advantages and pointed them out when interviewed. For instance:

The emphasis on getting health needs met and living a healthy life style:

"...we are doing everything we can to stay healthy...we've been able to focus on ourselves. We've been to more doctors than ever in our lives."

"Doctor appointments! I just got my labs yesterday..."

"Winter Nights provides all the transportation we need."

"There is a safe place here for mental health meetings, calls, Zooms, on the grounds."

"The healthy part of this place is outstanding. We had a great exercise class at the last place...we thrived there."

"The food is outstanding."

"Trying my best, taking care of my health."

The opportunity to save money and plan for the future:

"My plan is to stay until June, save money...so I have enough. But wages are so low that we may not be able to afford a place. So, if I can get help, I'll buy an RV and wages should be enough to pay for a parking place each month."

"We got nervous when things shut down. But here we don't have to spend any money."

"We're looking at other cities to move to. We talked to other families here about sharing a place...Maybe just for a year. We will relocate. We are getting our income sources together, an ongoing income. We've been able to save here."

The ability to consolidate paperwork and resources:

"Exceeded expectation because I can save...Working on getting a driver's license, getting the (children) social security cards."

"Looking (for housing, online) every day, trying to get more income so I can take care of them."

"I've just been here one month and I need to get paperwork straightened out and save money for a deposit."

"Bill and the staff worked to make it possible for me to work."

There is a feeling of "extended family" in such a small group sheltered together, and several expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share experiences:

"We lost some resources but gained some too. I'm not ashamed or embarrassed anymore."

"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'm glad I found this place. I'm happier, more outgoing. I'm heard. It's time to love myself. "

"I'm thankful for everything I've been through and the only one I can change is me."

"Things are personalized. It's a testimony to Winter Nights and learning about life skills. This has been nothing but a wonderful experience."





Sheltering Families

Special thanks to Orinda Community Church for hosting Winter Nights families for the past 4 weeks. Another great location!

A special shout out to Lani Shepp, OCC's coordinator and the cohosting teams from Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church - Orinda, Karen Kalvass coordinator; St. Perpetua's Catholic Church - Lafayette, Karen Kalvass; Church of Santa Maria, Susan Lundstrom.

Walk to Support Winter Nights Family Shelter: A Great Success!



In April, a walk to support Winter Nights Family Shelter was organized by Concord United Methodist Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. The event featured walkers who were sponsored on a 1-mile and 2-mile route. Both started at Todos Santos Plaza in Concord.

Over \$5,000 was raised to help purchase meals for the month that families are staying at Concord UMC.

There were about 40 walkers carrying signs and walking around downtown Concord. In addition to the signs, walkers wore placards telling who sponsored the walk and why they were walking. The organizing committee also put together goody bags for everyone with water and snacks - much needed in the beautiful warm weather. By all counts, the walk was successful.

~ Judy Stillman, a "walker" and Winter Nights Executive Director



Adobe Employee Community Fund awards Winter Nights Family Shelter \$20,000

Each year Adobe employees come together to choose causes that matter to them and they invite local nonprofits to apply for grants that support programs and organizations addressing challenges affecting the communities where their employees live and work.

Gayle Taylor, an employee of Adobe and a shelter volunteer from St Stephen's Episcopal Church, invited Winter Nights to apply for their grants to non-profits who address challenges affecting homelessness and housing in the East Bay.

In late March we received this notification:

We are pleased to announce that your organization has been selected for a 2021 Adobe Employee Community Fund grant, in the amount of \$20,000. Our local employee panel reviewed your grant application and is thrilled to fund your work. Congratulations!

Our sincere thanks to the entire Adobe Employee Community Fund team for selecting Winter Nights as a recipient.

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 2 - 18 years old

Safe Parking Program
Extended through May 31
6 clients in 6 cars

Continued Success

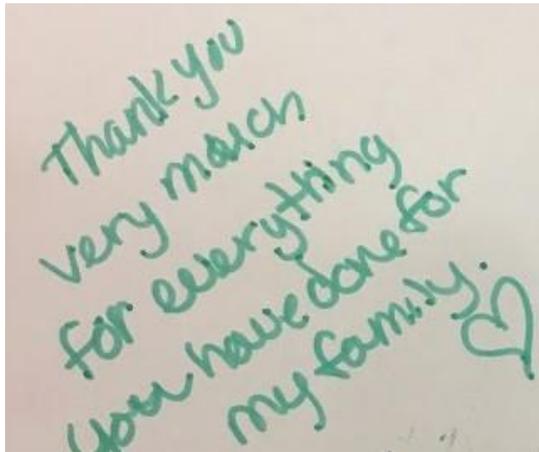


The Continued Success program keeps reaching out to alumni families to see how they are doing, and to offer support if needed. The program's goal is to keep alumni families together, employed and housed.

Here is an email from a Continued Success alumni family. This family expresses the long term impact of Winter Nights better than we ever could. We wish all our alumni families Continued Success.

Hello Winter Nights,

I'm so very happy to have received an email from you guys. I hope all is well with the program. I am doing extremely well since the program. I went to this program with intentions to gain housing. I currently have housing and transportation of my own. My children (are) doing fantastic in school. We currently lost my mother and I was trying to work through that. Working with a life coach that you guys gave me has helped me come to face with my grieving and work through it which was truly helpful. To this day I have completely changed and (am) very humble for the experience. I think the program is very beneficial if you allow it to help you, you can gain from it.



I would like to say thank you to Bill for the extra push and to the staff for their understanding at the time of my family stay with Winter Nights. I definitely gained family from this program and I'm extremely thankful. I would love to return to Winter Nights and be able to encourage the families that are there ...that there is light after this tunnel. You may not see it at the time but there is, like I am living proof that this program works if you really put your mind to it you can get it done. I am successful on my own with my children and I couldn't be more happier. Thank you Winter Nights for the push and the guidance that you guys gave me during my stay.

Offering hope, One Winter Night at a time.

Your gift will make an important difference in the lives of the children and families we serve.

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 has produced two short videos celebrating the Shelter's spirit of working with families on their path forward to housing.

They are each 2-3 minutes.

Click Here for:

[VIDEO Winter Nights Family Shelter](#)

[VIDEO Shelter Family Stories](#)

Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc is a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit, public benefit corporation. Tax ID # 84-4775540
Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, and no goods or services are provided in exchange for a donation.

Winter Nights respects and supports the privacy of all our clients. Any photos of clients are used only with their express permission.

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