



# The **GOOD NEWS** Letter

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

January 2019

## From the Shelter

A note from a current family at the Shelter:

Dear Winter Nights Staff,  
We wanted to let all of you know how thankful and appreciative we are for all the Christmas gifts and blessings each of you have given to our family. You kept the spirit and magic of Christmas alive for all of us and we are grateful, blessed and thankful for all you do ♡

A single dad who moved to a more permanent shelter opportunity recently told Winter Nights staff that he wanted to come “home”. He said he was joking for the most part, but other than not having to move every two weeks and having easy access to a daily shower, he misses Winter Nights. “100 times better.” he said. He and his son miss all the interactions with the kids, the staff & volunteers and the tutors.

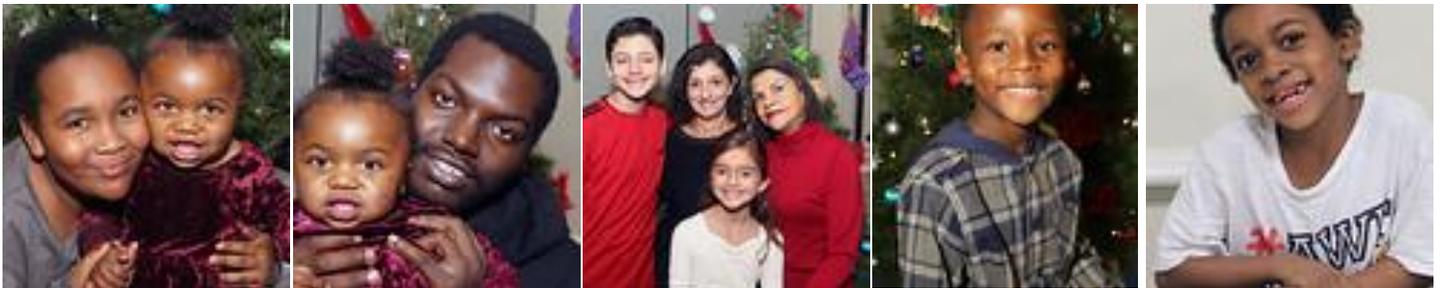
From the prior director of the *Homeless Outreach Program for Education (HOPE), Mt. Diablo Unified School District*

“Your program is the only program around here that I feel people are treated with love and compassion. I know that because this is what the families tell me. Their families can stay together and the children are always so happy. It also gives them an opportunity to work, save money and really get up and out of the homeless situation. In addition, Winter Nights does an amazing job of connecting families with housing resources such as shelter inc... We so appreciate all of your work!” —*Vivica Taylor*

*HOPE works with Winter Nights staff, tutors and families on the educational needs of children in the program.*

## Christmas at Winter Nights Family Shelter

Our thanks to Michael Fox, Temple Isaiah, for photos and our families, who agreed to share them with you.



**Winter Nights Family Shelter is currently serving**

**8 families \* 28 guests \* 13 adults & 15 children  
6 girls, 8 boys: 1 year to 16 years old**

*One child is special needs with a service dog  
Two families are expecting babies in February*

**Winter Night's Parking Lot Program\*** opened January 1 and is beginning to fill up.

**3 Cars; 7 people: a single woman, and 2 families**

One woman is expecting a baby in March

*\*PLP provides WN staff supervised overnight parking in East Contra Costa with access to bathroom, breakfast and our day center for showers and services.*

## Where do Winter Nights families come from? The Intake Process

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Where do Winter Nights families come from?

The answer is as unique as each family we serve.

*"Where were they living before Winter Nights?"* Most of our clients are Contra Costa residents, so they were living in the county. A few come to us from Alameda County. Parents and their children were living in their cars, staying in a motel, living on the streets/ in a park, couch-surfing with a friend or relative or using a Warming Center.

*"How do they find Winter Nights?"* Sometimes it's word of mouth; one family tells another family. But more often we receive calls from a network of agencies in Contra Costa who refer a homeless family in need. Among Winter Nights' partners to place families in emergency shelter are:

- 211 Help Line
- CORE (*Coordinated Outreach, Referral, Engagement*)
- GRIP (*Greater Richmond Interfaith Program*)
- Faith Communities
- Social Workers
- John Muir Hospital
- Contra Costa Health Services
- Shelter, Inc
- Schools (HOPE program)
- Contra Costa County Hospital

The fit is important. We serve homeless moms and dads with children up to the age of 19 (if they are in school). Many shelters cannot keep families together due to the rules and limitations they work with. Imagine being told that you and your 12 year old daughter are welcome, but your 13 year old son will have to go someplace else because the shelter does not allow teenagers. Some shelters do not accept fathers, or the shelter is single sex.

Our Program Manager, Bill Shaw, is the first contact for the agencies. They call Bill and together determine if there is a basic fit between their client and our program. If there is, he asks that the family call him directly. It is the first step in determining if the family is ready to do

the work necessary to address the issues holding them back from stable housing.

If they call, Bill listens to their situation and collects basic information: number in the family, ages, where they are living now, do they have a vehicle, is a parent working. He also describes the Winter Nights' program and its boundaries: clean and sober, a curfew, 8-9 families living in tents at volunteer faith communities, move every 2 weeks, case management, weekly goals and 30 day evaluations. Bill says he gets a "gut feel" about a family's interest in participating when describing these "rules". Some never call him back.

Like most shelters, we stopped managing a Waiting List a few years ago. There are so many families in need, and by the time we might have space, weeks or months later, they were "gone". Our current policy is "keep checking back with us".

If there is a fit, and space at the shelter, Bill asks them to quickly meet with Winter Nights' for an Intake Interview. Families provide driver's licenses, medical cards & other pertinent documents, the schools the children attend, employment information, etc. There are times when a family must be declined at this point, usually if drug use or alcohol abuse is suspected. But usually the family is welcomed into the shelter that evening.

Where a family was living before, and how they were referred to Winter Nights varies. But once at the shelter they are housed and fed, their children are tutored and make it to school each day, and a plan is prepared with services to back it up. The goal is to quickly restore them to stable housing.

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### It costs \$952/night to fund *One Winter Night*

***One Winter Night*** is a volunteer effort to raise supplemental funds for the **Winter Nights Family Shelter** to

- **Expand the number of weeks the shelter is open** beyond the first week in June
- **Fund the Parking Lot Program in East County for individuals and families with children living in their cars**

If you would like to support Winter Nights with a donation, of any amount, checks can be made out to **Winter Nights** (with ***One Winter Night*** in the memo) & sent to:

Winter Nights Family Shelter  
1543 Sunnyvale Ave.  
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Online donations can be made at <https://cccwinternights.org/contribute/one-winter-night/>

Email us at [OneWinterNight@CCCWinterNights.org](mailto:OneWinterNight@CCCWinterNights.org)

Winter Nights website <https://cccwinternights.org/>