Thanks to a grant from First 5 Yolo, the Yolo Crisis Nursery has hired an on-call overnight caregiver, ready at moment's notice to take in children from newborns through age 5. Executive Director Heather Sleuter expects to fill the Nursery’s cribs more frequently once word of expanded overnight program gets out. (Image by Jennifer Ditty / Snapshot Sisters Photography)

Nursery reinvigorates its overnight program

By Karen Adams
Member, Yolo Crisis Nursery Board of Directors
Davis Enterprise newspaper, February 2016

On Christmas Day, a distraught young dad called the Yolo Crisis Nursery. He asked whether we had a voucher for a motel where he could stay that night with his wife and 5-year-old son.

The family was homeless. The temperature outside was dropping. The dad feared the family would have to spend the night in their car.

“Your son can stay in our nursery,” we told him. “Come on in and we’ll help you and your wife find a place to stay as well.”

Once at the nursery, the parents told us their story. The dad had lost his construction job. Then they lost their home. They had used a few motel vouchers, but their supply was gone.

“In all, the boy stayed with us for five nights, until the family got into transitional housing,” said Heather Sleuter, executive director of the nursery. “We’ll be following up with them every three months to make sure they’re getting along OK, and they can call us any time they need a hand.”

Several other families sought overnight care for their children during the holidays. Fortunately, we have increased our capacity for such care thanks to a multiyear grant from
First 5 Yolo. With the new funding, we now employ a permanent, on-call staff member to supplement our daytime staff.

“Our ability to provide overnight care was diminished during our recent transition to an independent nonprofit,” Sleuter said. “But we’re back at full staffing and spreading the word that we can take in children at a moment’s notice, day or night.”

She shared two additional stories of recent overnight stays:

A young mom, leaving a violent situation at home, brought in her 3-year-old son for a few nights. She and her son are now staying at Empower Yolo, and the boy comes to the nursery during the day when his mom is looking for work and handling court matters.

Another young mother turned to us when her maternity leave was about to end. She was returning to a job working overnight shifts at an assisted-living facility, and she couldn’t find anyone to care for her 3-month-old daughter while she worked. Her baby stayed with us for a few nights till a suitable babysitter could be found.

The stories are different, but every family we serve shares this: They badly need help and have little or no support system. We keep their young, vulnerable children safe and help the parents resolve their immediate crises. Then we continue case management for a full year to ensure that the children remain safe and the families intact.

Grants from First 5 Yolo and other institutional funders allow us to help children and families, but we also depend on donations from individuals as well as funds raised by our support group, the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery. A big thank-you to everyone who helps our overall mission of preventing child abuse and neglect as well as strengthening families in Yolo County.

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Speaking of the Friends’ fundraising: Their annual “Krustaceans for Kids” crab feed is coming on March 18. Individual tickets are $45. Sponsorships start at $500 and include four or more dinner tickets. Both tickets and sponsorships can be purchased at www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

The menu includes all-year-can-eat cracked crab with lemon and melted butter, pasta with marinara sauce, bread, salad and dessert. Craft beer and wine will be available at a no-host bar beginning at 6 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Center, 203 E. 14th St. in Davis. Dinner will be served at 7.

At this fourth annual event, we’re hoping to raise $40,000. Sponsorships are key to our success, and we’re thankful to Sutter Health for signing on as our premiere sponsor.

As of Thursday afternoon, other sponsors include Union Bank, state Sen. Lois Wolk, University Honda, Nugget Markets, Jim and Lucinda Childress, Will Arnold, Fleet Feet Davis,
Davis Ace Hardware and Anderson Plaza, Morse Custom Homes and Remodeling, Jim and Donna Provenza, John and Sandi Kniep, and David and Tammy Amaral.

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A final note: In last month’s column, we inadvertently left out several groups who provided generous support to the nursery during the holiday season. The Davis Odd Fellows Lodge contributed $1,000, and the Soroptimists International of Davis contributed to our “Adopt-the-Nursery” program. Lyon Real Estate collected and donated several big bags of coats to the nursery. Three churches – University Covenant, the Church of Saint Martin and the Lutheran Church of the Incarnation – all sent checks.

A full list of our “Family Circle” of institutional funders can be viewed at www.yolocrisisnursery.org/supporters. Thanks to one and all.