



Yolo Crisis Nursery leaders unite in support of the Big Day of Giving on May 4. Front row, from left: Karen Adams, Jane Eadie, Sandi Kniep, Heather Sleuter and Cam Stoufer. Back row, from left: Samrina Marshall, Kim Maslaniak, J.D. Denton, JoEllen Welsch, Nancy Storm, Anna Enriquez and Stewart Teal. Mother and Baby Source provided the prop, a canine-themed baby mat symbolizing the event known affectionately as Big DOG.

Mom's tale goes to heart of why the Nursery exists

Editor's Note: This column appeared in the Davis Enterprise newspaper on April 23, 2107.

By Karen Adams
Member, Yolo Crisis Nursery Board of Directors

Slowly but steadily, a young Yolo County mom's life spiraled out of control a few months back. Fortunately, though, she found her way to the Yolo Crisis Nursery and kept her small family together.

We're telling Maria's story today for a reason. It demonstrates why we're asking community members to support our programs on May 4, the regional Big Day of Giving. Donations directly support our early intervention services to nurture healthy and resilient children, strengthen parents and preserve families.

"Maria had been living with her mother and her two kids, who are 5 and 2," says Heather Sleuter, executive director of nursery. "But then the grandma passed away. The young mom couldn't pay the rent by herself."

Before long, she lost her home. Kids in tow, she couch-surfed at friends' homes for a while. Then her car broke down and she couldn't pay for repairs. She sank into depression before finally finding the nursery.

"We kept the kids day and night for eight days," Sleuter says, "while the mom got medical care. Together, we developed a safety plan for the kids. In this family's case, that meant finding a relative who agreed to let the three live with her long-term."

For a time, the kids still visited the nursery by day and spent the night in their new home. At the nursery, staff cared for the kids with special attention to lingering effects of the trauma of their grandma's death, their period of homelessness and their mother's depression.

Meanwhile, nursery staff helped their mom find a new preschool closer to their new neighborhood. Today, they are settled into both their new home and their new school.

"This family really illustrates why we exist," Sleuter says. "If a parent's problems keep escalating, our goal is to intervene and de-escalate the crisis, providing support so the family can remain intact and the kids suffer as little trauma as much as possible."

Sleuter is proud that 98 percent of families served by the nursery do not enter the child welfare system. That figure is a key measure of the success of two of the nursery's signature programs: emergency/respice care for children and wrap-around services for parents. But the stories behind the numbers give Sleuter the biggest sense of satisfaction.

"We know that preventing children from being separated from the parents is best if at all possible," she says. "We want to protect kids not only from physical harm but from toxic stress as well. I'm grateful that our supporters allow us to be here for them and others like them."

Back to Big Day of Giving: The annual event will happen this year on May 4, and there's one big change from previous years. You don't have to wait until May 4 to make your donation.

Already, each of the 600 participating nonprofits has a unique URL (website address) through which you may "schedule" a credit card transaction to happen automatically on May 4. A link to the Nursery's donation site is posted on www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

JoEllen Welsch, a nursery Board member, is chairing our Big Day efforts and brims with enthusiasm about raising much-needed funds.

"We're thrilled that Davisville Management Company has agreed to offer a matching challenge again this year," Welsch said. "Greg McNece of Davisville has set the amount at \$10,000. We have some other challenges in the works and will announce them soon or on May 4."

Welsch said that as a new board member, she feels like a proud parent when she thinks of the nursery and the good it does for the community.

"Keeping families together is so important for children, especially, and for our community too," she said. "I've been learning about the research and seeing the results first-hand. For every dollar our nursery spends, it returns many times over, in sparing the costs of foster care and other expenses tied to trauma-filled childhoods and broken families."

"We foster resiliency and healthy families," she said. "It's as simple and all-important as that."

Finally, we can report that our March 17 “Krustaceans for Kids” Crab Feed resulted in net proceeds of \$61,000. That sum eclipsed the proceeds of the previous four crab feeds, and we’re grateful to the many sponsors, guests, volunteers and donors of auction and raffle prizes.

Plans are already getting under way for next year’s crab feed. If you might consider lending your time and talents to the organizing committee, please email friends@yolocrisisnursery.org.

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