



Preschool teacher Oscar Lopez prepares a morning snack for children at the Nursery, which provides early intervention services for at-risk families in Yolo County.

Photo Credit: Kelly Barr

With Nursery's help, family heads off a potential crisis

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Sometimes, a family's fortune can change on a dime. An unexpected hospitalization, a loss of employment, an eviction notice – all can cause a stable family to lose its footing.

That's where the Yolo Crisis Nursery steps in, as we did for a Yolo County family of four earlier this spring.

"The mom works back-to-back part-time jobs, basically 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day, while the dad cares for their kids," says Heather Sleuter, executive director. "They ran into trouble when he needed emergency knee surgery. The mom would have lost income and probably even her jobs if she took time off during his hospitalization and recovery."

With no local family members to help out, the parents brought their son and daughter, ages 3 and 1, to the Nursery. They stayed at the Nursery for nearly two weeks, sleeping in the overnight rooms and joining other children in the common rooms during the day.

"Bottom line, we allowed the mom to continue working to support the family and keep them healthy," Sleuter says.

Initial screenings and intake questions also revealed other areas in which this family could use assistance. When talking to the parents, we learned that they would soon need new housing. Case manager Lisa Young worked with them to find a solution.

Second, a developmental screening for the children revealed an issue that needed attention; we helped address it as part of our wrap-around services. Incidentally, if the family not had health insurance, we would have helped them sign up, as we do for every client, according to Sleuter.

“For this family, we’re now providing occasional respite care for the kids when the dad has physical therapy or other appointments,” Sleuter says. “We’ll be following up with them regularly to see that they stay on track toward long-term stability.”

The services we provided to this family were free of charge, thanks to the generosity of our major funders and community members. Which brings up the subject of the Big Day of Giving on May 4: We’re pleased to announce that we raised more than \$34,000 during the regional philanthropic effort.

“We want to offer our sincere gratitude to everyone who supported us,” said JoEllen Welsch, a member of the Nursery’s Board of Directors and chair of the Big Day of Giving Committee. “Special thanks to the groups who provided challenge gifts: Davisville Management Company; the Davis Bike Club; the Nursery’s Board of Directors; the Martha Bernauer Family and Lyon Real Estate; and the King Family Foundation. We’re honored by your demonstrable support of our mission.”

Big Day of Giving concludes our major fundraising activities for the fiscal year ending June 30, and we’re on track to meet our fiscal targets. As we look to 2017-18, we’ve begun collecting information to steer our decision-making.

Just over a week ago, three staff members paid a fact-finding visit to a thriving crisis nursery in Spokane, Wash. Sleuter and her colleagues – Oscar Lopez and Heather Turner – toured the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery. Sleuter says the trip was invaluable and garnered many useful ideas.

The staff and Board have also begun gathering information to craft a strategic plan.

“We’re finishing our second fiscal year as an independent nonprofit, so it’s a good time to take stock,” Board President Jane Eadie says. “We’re excited to create an actionable plan with realistic steps forward. The Nursery’s future brims with possibility.”