



Lesli Chuck, left, and Jane Eadie, president of the Yolo Crisis Nursery board of directors, have some fun with hats and cupcakes at last year's Krustaceans for Kids crab-feed fundraiser at the Woodland Community & Senior Center.

Yolo Crisis Nursery: Celebrating successes and moving forward

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The children we serve may be young, but the Yolo Crisis Nursery itself is growing up.

As it launches its third year as an independent nonprofit, the Yolo Crisis Nursery is stable, strong and in a position to plan for a long, thriving future. With two very successful spring fundraisers in the rearview mirror, the board of directors has leveled its sights on a long sought-after strategic plan.

Work has begun on a three-year "roadmap" to ensure that the nursery's staff, board and band of supporters and volunteers focus on the priorities the community expects — building a sound infrastructure, identifying areas for program enhancement, increasing outreach to clients and prospective partners, and securing sustainable funding — all of which will enable the nursery to continue its mission to protect and support our most vulnerable children and their families.

After a series of focus groups met in April and May, the board of directors took the results and broke into subcommittees that will work over the summer and into fall. The goal is to finalize the plan by the end of 2017.

All of this is made possible by the ongoing broad-based community support for the Yolo Crisis Nursery, as evidenced by our successful spring fundraisers. Donors and community members once again stepped up and came out in record numbers for the nursery's crab feed in March and the region's Big Day of Giving in May.

"Krustaceans for Kids," the annual crab feed directed by the Friends of Yolo Crisis Nursery, was once again a sellout — even after the event was moved to the Woodland Community & Senior Center, a much larger venue, to accommodate the demand for tickets. More than 500 attendees from all over Yolo County were served a continuous supply of food and fun by 100 hard-working volunteers from the National Charity League and other local organizations.

The event raised just over \$70,000, more than double last year's effort.

Then there was "Big DOG," as the annual Big Day of Giving is known. Sponsored by the Sacramento Region Community Foundation to shine a light on the work of local nonprofits and raise unrestricted funds for their operation, the 24-hour effort this year raised more than \$7 million regionally.

In only the second year of participation, Yolo Crisis Nursery garnered more than \$33,000 in total donations, ranking the nursery in the top 50 of the 599 nonprofits that participated. This tremendous achievement was made possible by the generous challenge gifts from local organizations including the Davisville Management Company, the Davis Bike Club, the King Family Foundation, the Martha Bernauer family and Lyon Real Estate Davis, and our own Yolo Crisis Nursery board of directors.

The nursery continues to benefit from the dedicated generosity and support of a number of local organizations — the Rotary Clubs of Davis, Soroptimist International of Davis and the Davis Odd Fellows and Rebekah lodges — as well as some new community groups including The New Home Company and the Joe Abele Memorial Organization.

This broad-based support over the past year has kept the nursery thriving and doing what it does best — creating a safe haven for children and their families from all over Yolo County.

Board president Jane Eadie summed it up nicely: "We are so grateful to our community and local partners for demonstrating again and again their support for the nursery's mission to nurture healthy and resilient children and strengthen and preserve families."

In addition to the ongoing commitment of donors and community partners, the nursery also has been able to grow internally to create a more supportive environment for our families and our staff.

Four new members joined the board of directors in January. They came with a wide range of experience, community connections and expertise, along with a tremendous passion and enthusiasm to help the nursery thrive.

There will be two open positions on the board of directors starting in January. If you believe in the mission of the nursery, have some time to donate, and are passionate about the safety and health of young children and their families, this is your opportunity to step up and make something happen for your community. Get more information at www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

Inside the nursery itself, six talented new staff members were hired this past year by Executive Director Heather Sleuter to support our growing client needs and the demands of our ever-expanding programs and services.

The nursery is also expanding efforts and resources further into Woodland and the Yolo County community by partnering with Empower Yolo, an organization that provides 24-hour crisis intervention to individuals and families affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking and child abuse.

The aim is to create a continually supportive environment and to bring direct services to parents experiencing domestic violence and other emergencies that put their young children at risk of abuse or neglect.

We encourage you to stay connected to the Yolo Crisis Nursery on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Subscribe to the nursery newsletter for regular updates, so that you can follow all the wonderful work that's happening at the Yolo Crisis Nursery.

— This column was written by members of the Yolo Crisis Nursery board of directors; it publishes monthly.