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## **Yolo Crisis Nursery: Board shifts into high gear**

By JD Denton

“If we don’t know where we’re going, we’ll never get there...”

That was the dilemma facing the Yolo Crisis Nursery board of directors in early 2017. After two challenging years of working to stabilize the new independent non-profit status of a crisis nursery that had been in operation since 2001, the big question for the board was where to go from here.

The nursery was stable, finances were in the black, and families were being served. So, what’s the problem? It’s just not enough. The board, under the leadership of President Jane Eadie, agreed that a long-range plan was needed to get the nursery where it needed to be.

“Questions demanding answers were who are we, where do we need to go, and how are we going to get there” said Eadie. “As one board member quipped, what do we want to be when we grow up.”

It was a daunting task, to be sure, and not something you scribble on the clean side of a dirty napkin in a coffee shop. The board decided to bring in the pros. Enter *The Weiss Group*, a local consulting firm that specializes in helping non-profits find their way.

Steve Weiss and his crew met several times with the board of directors to lay groundwork, then assembled a series of focus groups with donors, volunteers, community leaders, and yes, the nursery staff itself. Meetings were held, white boards were filled, and felt tip pens were worn down to nubs. Finally, a draft plan emerged that was tweaked, then tweaked again, and after lively debate on every word, phrase and punctuation mark, the Yolo Crisis Nursery 3-Year Strategic Plan saw the light of day in January of this year.

Page one formalizes the Yolo Crisis Nursery mission and vision.

The mission: “The Yolo Crisis Nursery provides early intervention services in a safe environment to nurture healthy and resilient children, strengthen parents and preserve families.”

The vision: “Every child in Yolo County grows up in a safe, loving and stable family.”

The rest of the plan is how the nursery will make this happen. There are five goals, along with indicators to measure them, and strategies to reach them.

**Goal 1: Sustainable Funding.** This has been front and center for nursery supporters and the board since day one as a 501(c)3 nonprofit. After all, if you can’t pay the bills and meet payroll, you can’t stay in business.

**Goal 2: Operations.** Developing an infrastructure and staffing model that will make it possible for the nursery to keep operating at a high level as it serves more and more clients.

**Goal 3: Capital Campaign.** Yes, the nursery needs a new home. The 1,400-square-foot rental home in a quiet Davis neighborhood that has served so well for the last 17 years has been outgrown. If the nursery is to grow or even just maintain its services, a larger, more permanent home is needed.

**Goal 4: Visibility and Outreach.** That’s getting the word out, not only to nursery donors, but also to the families who need nursery services, as well as nursery strategic partners in the medical and social services communities.

**Goal 5: Quality Programs/Service Expansion.** This is what the nursery does. Simply put, nursery programs and services protect children and keep families together.

This plan is ambitious, no doubt about it. So, how will it be accomplished?

That's up to you. Maybe you've supported the nursery with donations over the years (if so, thank you very much), but you're just aching to do more. Well, opportunity is not just knocking right now, it's kicking in your door.

If you have some time to give and some skills looking for meaningful work, you can be part of the future of the Yolo Crisis Nursery. You don't have to work inside the nursery or join the board of directors, but you can make things happen at a level that fits your lifestyle. Work groups are being formed to be staffed by people like you, people with some time and talent to give who want to do something that benefits the community. Some examples...

Got communication skills of any kind? The Public Outreach Work Group is charged with creating a comprehensive marketing and outreach plan to reach the greater Yolo County community. Expertise is needed in social media, written and spoken word, and public speaking. Here's your chance to be a voice.

Or maybe the Medical Advisory Work Group will be a better fit. This group will work with the medical community to educate new mothers, collaborate with organizations and providers to support parenting skills, and improve child healthcare access, including preventive care. If you have experience in maternal/child health or at any level in medicine, this is your wake-up call.

These are just a couple of examples, but there's more, lots more. Your contribution can be a one-off project or a longer commitment, whatever you're able to bring to the party. Dash off a quick email to [board@yolocrisisnursery.org](mailto:board@yolocrisisnursery.org), and we'll get right back to you to discuss possibilities.

The nursery board of directors is all in on this deal. This board gets things done, and now that there's a plan in hand, look out. They know where they're going and you can be sure that they will get there.