Yolo Crisis Nursery: Offering Families a Well-timed Helping Hand

By: JoEllen Welsch, Vice President Elect, Yolo Crisis Nursery Board of Directors

Marie, a young single mother, was due to work the night shift and was without care for her 22-month-old son. Marie relied on a friend to watch her son at night, but at the last minute, her friend backed out. With her shift about to start and no one to care for her son, Marie was frantic and faced with a difficult choice – until someone suggested the Yolo Crisis Nursery.

The nursery responded immediately by picking up the child and caring for him for several nights. Marie worked with the Nursery’s team to find regular overnight childcare. With a little help, the crisis was averted. Marie was able to keep her job, her home, and most importantly, ensure her son was safe.

As I reflect back on my near two-year term on the Board of Directors and look forward to my upcoming term as Vice-President of the Yolo Crisis Nursery, I can’t help but reflect back on why I chose it. My reasons are many, but can all be encapsulated by the story of Marie and her 22 month-old son.

Unfortunately, Marie’s story is not uncommon. In Yolo County, roughly 20 percent of our community lives below the poverty level. Many families are facing dire challenges, labor under high levels of stress, and function without a support network.

Who bears the brunt of these crises? Most often it is the youngest and most vulnerable members of our community, children from birth to age 5. The levels of abuse and neglect correspond with high levels of family stress. California has the highest incidence of abuse and neglect in the country. Closer to home, Yolo County’s
rate of abuse and neglect has historically been comparable to or higher than the state for children ages birth to 5 years.

The Yolo Crisis Nursery is here to help. We serve young children up to age five and their families. The nursery offers wrap-around services to keep families together, help them navigate crises, and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Yolo Crisis Nursery offers voluntary and free, nurturing childcare for ages birth through 5 years, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Equally important, Yolo Crisis Nursery’s wrap-around services help parents resolve the problems that brought them to our door. The nursery strives to preserve families. Families that stay whole become stronger. Children are less likely to become troubled teens. The cycle is broken.

Since opening its doors in 2001, the Yolo Crisis Nursery has served approximately 4,000 children with a 98% success rate of keeping children out of the child welfare system. Over the past year the Nursery served 47% more children and 13% more families than the previous year. Last year a child entered the nursery doors 2,549 times for crisis nursery respite services. 54% of these children were from families at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and 64% of these children might have been at risk of domestic violence.

Every family the Yolo Crisis Nursery serves is different, but each one is in crisis, and all in need of aid with little or no support systems. The nursery keeps their young, vulnerable children safe and helps the parents resolve their immediate crises. And they continue to work with and follow families for a year to ensure that the family successfully transitions out of crisis, the children remain safe, and the family stays whole.

Marie’s story reminds us that with a little help at just the right moment, families can avert crises. Rather than free-falling, they turn towards a more promising future. The Yolo Crisis Nursery works to empower families, so they and their children can thrive.

The Yolo Crisis Nursery has changed my life in countless ways not only by being a Board member, but also as an active supporter and donor. If you, too, would like to help a Yolo County family at just the right moment, please consider donating today. The Yolo Crisis Nursery could not survive without the generosity of our community, and we are grateful for your support. Please visit www.yolocrisisnursery.org to learn more, get involved, and give to the Yolo Crisis Nursery.