Yolo Crisis Nursery: New Year Brings a New Chapter

The holidays bring much joy, but for those battling mental illness, the many stresses of the season can be overwhelming.

Early last month, Joan, the mother of a newborn baby, reached out to the nursery seeking respite care. Joan delivered her baby to the nursery, completed the paperwork, and said her goodbyes. When Joan did not return for her baby, it quickly became clear she intended to leave her child for good.

Joan suffers from mental illness and had stopped taking her medications. Thankfully, she had listed her parents as an emergency contact. The nursery sprang into action, located the grandparents of the infant, and helped to locate Joan. The nursery’s wraparound service supported the grandparents with care for the baby, and we helped Joan get the care she needed.

A month later, Joan is in treatment, back on medication and has a new job and a new place to live. And most importantly, she is with her child. Joan recently told us, “I am so thankful for the nursery’s help. Without it, I would have lost my baby.”

It is stories like Joan’s that have made my wife, Chris, and me long-term supporters of the Yolo Crisis Nursery both personally and through our business, Fleet Feet in Davis.

In the fall of 2014, Heidy Kellison and Becky Heard asked me to meet to discuss the Yolo Crisis Nursery. Just a few months earlier, these women had led the charge with their bundles of energy to save the nursery after the sponsoring agency departed Yolo County. This left the nursery in jeopardy of closing after serving the county since 2001.
My first thought was they were looking for a donation, but no, it was me. The grassroots effort to save the nursery had raised enough money to fund 12 months of operations. However, without a new sponsoring agency, it was decided that the best option for long-term success was to become an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit. A charter board of directors was being recruited, and they wanted me, a local business owner and nursery supporter, to join them.

My inclination was to say no as my wife, Chris, and I were on the verge of retirement. Instead, I said yes and committed to two years as a board member. I am now finishing my fourth and final year on the board of directors alongside Becky Heard. I am moving on to retirement to enjoy my family and some travel. Becky will remain actively involved by leading the nursery’s development and community outreach.

I signed up to support the nursery, but the experience has enriched my life. Working with this dedicated group of individuals to help the Yolo Crisis Nursery transition from survive to thrive has been meaningful, satisfying, and educational.

In 2015, our nine-member board was tasked with the job of building a plane as it was flying. The board has now grown to 15 members. The plane is flying just fine, only now it needs to fly farther, faster and higher. I know it will.

The incoming board for 2019 includes five new members who are joining a powerhouse of experience, commitment and passion. It is my pleasure to introduce:

- Wendy Chason, retired Davis Joint Unified School District teacher and librarian. Wendy dedicated her career to children’s education and now, in retirement, is continuing her commitment to helping Yolo County kids.
- Penny Howard, real estate agent. Penny has experience in Real Estate and Accounting with Yolo County, with a bachelor’s degree in social work. Penny’s commitment to helping people has been the cornerstone of her career and her life.
- Eric Miller, attorney with Boutin Jones. Eric is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom II and is active in numerous community and charitable organizations.
- Will Pro, Owner, Will Pro Construction. Will is a Yolo County native and a third-generation builder with expertise in construction and development.
- Steven S. Willhoff, CPA and partner at Carbahal and Company, joined the board of directors as treasurer. Steve has a wealth of accounting and tax expertise and is actively engaged in helping the children in our community.
The holidays are about giving, enjoying time with treasured family and friends and being thankful for all we have. I am thankful for my time with the Yolo Crisis Nursery. It has enriched my life, helped my community. I encourage you to be grateful and generous to your loved ones and to those in our community, like Joan, who are struggling this holiday season.

The nursery would not exist without the generosity and support of our community. Investing in the nursery is not just investing in the future of the children we serve, it is investing in the future of our community. To learn more about the Yolo Crisis Nursery, to get involved or to donate, please visit www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

— J.D. Denton is a retiring member of Yolo Crisis Nursery Board of Directors.