Yolo Crisis Nursery: Volunteers help protect children, families

By Pat Stromberg

“Volunteer” is a word that we are fortunate to hear frequently in our generous community. With so many worthwhile organizations in need of volunteers, the challenge can be in finding just the right fit.

Over the years, I have volunteered with numerous organizations and my reasons for choosing them have varied from their genuine need, to the suggestion of a friend, to a mission that resonates to my core. It’s hearing the heartbreaking yet inspirational stories, such as “Judy’s,” that reaffirms my commitment to the Yolo Crisis Nursery.

As Judy rocked her newborn daughter, “Erica,” in the hospital, she was overwhelmed with love. She realized that as a young mother responsible for an innocent baby, her life would never be the same. Alone in the hospital room with her daughter, Judy also felt scared, isolated and unsure of what would come next, and these feelings were for good reason. Judy’s spouse, Erica’s father, was physically abusive, and Judy struggled with drug addiction to escape the pain.

Erica was born premature and had to remain in the hospital for additional care, but Judy was released. Upon returning home after giving birth, Judy was severely beaten.
Determined to see Erica, she returned to the hospital the next day to hold her baby girl. The hospital staff saw the bruising and were greatly concerned, triggering them to alert security. Judy was terrified, so she immediately fled the hospital.

After fleeing the hospital, her spouse retaliated with even more physical abuse and held her captive in their home. He did not allow her to leave for any reason, not even to visit Erica in the hospital.

When no parent or family appeared at the hospital for Erica, the authorities had no choice but to declare her abandoned. The newborn was discharged from the hospital into a foster home. One day, an opportunity finally presented itself. Trembling with fear, Judy escaped captivity. Resolute to find Erica, she reached out to her local women’s shelter for help. Judy connected with the Yolo Crisis Nursery for support as she reunited with Erica.

The Yolo Crisis Nursery cared for Erica while Judy worked towards a brighter future. Judy’s physical injuries from the abuse were so severe that she required reconstructive surgery. We cared for Erica while Judy was in the hospital and healing from surgery. For Judy, the physical healing was just the beginning. She needed time to recover emotionally and to address her addiction issues through counseling.

Judy worked hard to heal and to rebuild a happy and stable life for she and Erica. She secured and sustained a job, moved into a home, and purchased a vehicle for her family. Judy has remained sober and retained full custody of Erica. She graduated from needing the nursery’s services and just last week said, “I am forever grateful for the Yolo Crisis Nursery. I could not be where I am today without your loving care and support.”

Before joining the Board of Directors, I thought I knew what the nursery did. I had donated financially in the past and understood that the families served were in need and had very young children. I now know that Judy’s story is just one of many where the nursery prevented a crisis from escalating and turning into a tragedy.

As a new member of the Board of Directors, I toured the nursery and my understanding and appreciation of the available services increased significantly. My concern for families in need in our community also increased. The Yolo Crisis Nursery Executive Director and her team provide trauma-informed care for the children, parenting education, wrap-around services and a tremendous amount of support for our client families, and they do it in an incredible way.

No child is turned away, so the nursery team regularly overcomes challenges to ensure the children are safe and the families receive the needed services. If you are interested in
touring the nursery yourself or with a small group of friends, please request an appointment via email at bheard@yolocrisisnursery.org.

My experience with the Yolo Crisis Nursery has touched my heart in ways I never imagined. It has also introduced me to an incredible group of fellow board members. We all come to the board with diverse backgrounds, professions, and experience, but we are unified in our commitment to serve the most vulnerable in our community — children ages zero to five and their families.

The Yolo Crisis Nursery always has a need for more volunteers. Supporting the nursery could include volunteering to hold babies, joining the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery, making a financial donation, becoming a member of our Board of Directors or helping with a fundraising event like our upcoming Barn Dance on Oct. 19. Please consider this my invitation for you to join us with your time, talents or a financial contribution.

I promise that it will change your life, and you will be glad you did. To learn more, please visit our website www.yolocrisisnursery.org or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to my dear friend for asking me to join the Yolo Crisis Nursery.

– Pat Stromberg, a Yolo Crisis Nursery board member wrote this article.