



The **GOOD NEWS** Letter

*Celebrating the families, volunteers and staff of the
Winter Nights Family Shelter*

SEPTEMBER 2021

The Family Shelter begins its 18th season

Greetings,

Just a short note to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Winter Nights Family Shelter. After 11 years with Winter Nights, I have a deep love and respect for the many families whose lives our program has touched and for the many congregations and volunteers who make this program possible. I am proud to serve as Executive Director of this exceptional program.

As we prepare for our 18th Season of sheltering homeless families, we are again faced with many challenges. COVID-19 will continue to change how we operate. The good news is that we will open September 27, 2021, with guidelines in place to keep our families, volunteers and staff safe.

Have you heard? Volunteers will be able to serve in the shelter this season, with a few COVID-19 rules: vaccines, masks and social distancing (just like the families and staff). Thank you all for your behind the scenes support last season, and Welcome Back! We missed you!

I want to introduce Melissa Washburn as our new Shelter Program Manager. She is a former client who comes to us with a caring and compassionate heart, and a strong set of skills. Her job will be the daily management of the Shelter program and staff.

Your support, once again, will make this 2021-2022 shelter season a great success. Teamwork makes the dream work.

Bill



Sheltering Families



Walnut Creek Friends Church will kick-off the Shelter Season this year as the Host site for 2 weeks, with Maria Coburn and Rich Wallace at the helm.

Co-host congregations and coordinators include:

Grace Episcopal Church - Martinez, Christina Reich

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - Walnut Creek,
Kimber Blatter



Sheltering Families (continued)

From the Coordinators:

Maria Coburn - Coordinator for Walnut Creek Friends Church

"It's another first for us. After 10 years of co-hosting we became a host site in February/March 2021. That was in the "Covid style", no volunteers involved directly. We must have done something right because we were invited to host again. This time it's the real thing and we kick off the 2021-2022 season! We have two wonderful co-hosts, Grace Episcopal Church, Martinez and LDS Church, Walnut Creek, and we are ready to take off."

Christina Reich - Coordinator for Grace Episcopal Church - Martinez

"Members of the Grace Outreach Committee and their faithful team are ready to serve up some yummy dinners, provide groceries, and keep the families happy at Friends Church in Walnut Creek. Our crew is fully vaccinated and ready to be in fellowship, sharing the love of Christ with our community! We are very excited to meet the families as they always bring us so much joy! Here are our team leads ready to demonstrate love in action:

Marge Leeds Columba Salamony Liz Charlton Christina Reich



Bill's note from the Shelter's Opening Day

Thanks to our Host Walnut Creek Friends (Maria Coburn) and to Grace Episcopal (Christina Reich) for co-hosting Opening Day. High-Fives all around.

Moving in went well, with Staff member Stephanie McGuire at the helm and newly appointed Program Manager, Melissa Washburn, leading the charge

We open with 2 families, who moved from the Safe Parking Program. A family of 3 (dad and 2 daughters), and a mom and dad with 2 children, a 6-year-old and a 7-month-old.

Melissa has a scheduled an intake interview on Tuesday for a family of three. This third family will complete our roster until we move to St Anselm's on Oct 11 where one more family will be added to the shelter.

Thumbs up to Season 18,
Bill Shaw 9-27-21

The Safe Parking Program



The Safe Parking Program is now a Year-Round program! It is also operating at full capacity with a large wait list. There are 9 cars with 10 participants, and a waitlist of over 14 cars.

We are so excited to be able to provide this program in Pittsburg at the Church of the Nazarene. It is really changing lives for so many individuals, couples and families living in their vehicles. The Church threw a wonderful dinner for the SPP participants and staff early in September. It was fun for everyone, and great way to just

relax and enjoy each other's company. Thank You.

One of the families in the program, a father with two daughters, had been parking on the street in front of the church for several nights in late August. Donna, the SPP manager, went out and talked to the dad and brought them into the program immediately. As Bill said, "it's who we are and what we do".

This family, and one other (a mother and father with a 6-year-old and a 6-month-old) moved into the shelter this week.



**WINTER NIGHTS receives the
JustFaith Ministries'
Mary and Gary Becker Social Justice Award**



GWEN WATSON
Co-Founder of Winter Nights

Winter Nights was among three finalists for the Mary and Gary Becker Social Justice award given by JustFaith Ministries, a nonprofit organization that "forms, informs, and transforms people of faith by offering programs and resources that sustain them in their compassionate commitment to build a more just and peaceful world."

On January 23 they held a virtual 20th Anniversary celebration with over 120 Zoom participants. Winter Nights was announced as the recipient of the award, honoring the work of Gwen Watson in co-founding and nurturing the program!

We were so delighted and it is such an endorsement of the good work Winter Nights has been doing since 2004. Judy Stillman did a wonderful job accepting the award on behalf of Gwen and everyone at Winter Nights. JustFaith also awarded Winter Nights \$4,000 to continue to expand our programs.

We thank all those involved with JustFaith, those who nominated Winter Nights, those who voted, and those who work so hard each year to make Winter Nights the best it can be.

A note from Gwen Watson:

I am so humbly grateful for the growth of Winter Nights and knowing how many children were able to continue in the same schools as before their families lost their housing. I am so grateful to you and the directors and managers that are continuing to keep Winter Nights successful.

I'm so glad we won the first prize so we can expand , particularly the way we help the children stay in school and advance.

Fondly, Gwen

**Enjoy Oktoberfest and the Orinda Jazz Festival
Proceeds Support Winter Nights**

Saturday, October 2nd
2pm-4pm

Orinda Community Church Garden Patio
10 Irwin Way, Orinda

All ages welcome. **FREE admission!**
\$10 suggested donation to benefit
Winter Nights Family Shelter

A local Shelter for homeless families with children and a Safe Parking Program for families and individuals living in their cars with services to help them return to stable housing.

Food, Drinks, Pop-up Art Gallery

Performances by: Eve Marie Shahoian, Paul McKnight, Pato Milo, Darryl Rowe, Carol Alban, Jim Freeman, Mike Williams, Susan Miller, Nancy Tyler, Ted Parker, Joseph Hebert, and others!



In August, over 70 Winter Nights alumni families received the Continued Success quarterly check-in email. Many families replied, and some of their notes, edited for privacy, are below. We have added their "graduation" year.

Hello everyone,

Wow what a year so far. There have been many changes in such a short period of time. First, let me introduce myself. My name is Melissa and I'm excited to get to know all of you. I joined the team in March of this year, but my journey with Winter Nights began in late 2013 as a client.

Now that the Pandemic is starting to release its clutches the possibilities are endless once again. Schools are reopening, companies are hiring, outings are being planned with friends and family, and traveling is becoming a "thing" again.

Even though everything is starting to reopen it is still our responsibility to maintain good health practices. We know that these are still trying times as we get back on our feet, but positivity is key. We would love to listen as you share your Continued Success.

Our mission and promise are to always offer encouragement to set reachable goals, direction to keep you in that mindset, and last, but certainly not

least help find resources to resolve any issues that may arise in the future.

When you have a moment please reach out via call or email to let us know how you're doing. We would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Your Winter Nights Family

Single dad and son (2018):

Hi. I'm doing great. I am fully retired now and truly grateful that Winter Nights helped me when I needed it most. I'd like to thank you again. It's been almost four years since I utilized Winter Nights. I'm truly grateful. I hope you have a great and blessed day...

Mom, dad and 2 kids (2016):

Hello Winter Nights family, We are doing well striving despite dealing with this pandemic. Our kids are happy to be back to in person learning. They are now in 2nd and 4th grade. I continue to work at the University, compounding chemo for our cancer patients. It's always good to hear from you. With love

Mom, dad and 2 kids (2020):

Welcome to the team Melissa. We are doing good. I'm looking for work. I have a couple of job interviews lined up. Both kids are great. Winter Nights is a BLESSING. PLEASE tell Bill and Teri we love them

The Family Shelter

3 families - 10 guests
5 adults & 5 children
6 months - 15 years old

The Safe Parking Program

9 cars - 10 participants
8 individuals & 1 couple
The oldest participant is in her 70's

Offering hope, One Winter Night at a time.

Checks can be made out to

Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc and sent to:

Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc · 404 Gregory Lane, #7 · Pleasant Hill, CA · 94523

Online donations can be made through this link > [DONATE](#)

Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, public benefit corporation - Tax ID # 84-4775540

Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, and no goods or services are provided for a donation.

Web: www.cccwinternights.org



Contact: info@cccwinternights.org

[FACEBOOK](#)

[VIDEO Winter Nights Family Shelter](#)

VIDEO Shelter Family Stories