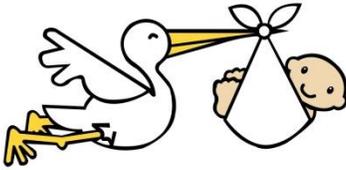




# The **GOOD NEWS** Letter

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

December 2018



We are pleased to announce the birth of a healthy baby boy to parents at the shelter just before Thanksgiving. Mom and baby are doing well. Dad, too! Our thanks to all those who have donated “baby-stuff” for this precious little one, who arrived earlier than expected.

## **Magical Moment for a Rising Soccer Star**

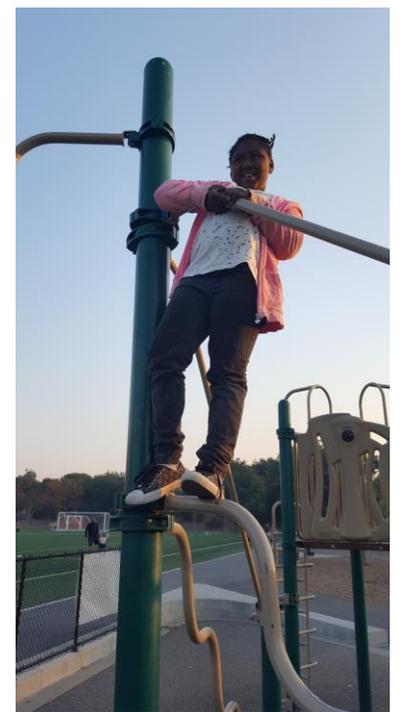
A few weeks ago, a volunteer for Winter Nights drove a mom and her eight-year-old daughter to a medical appointment for the mother. While her mom was seeing the doctor, the young girl (*let's call her Sunny*) and the volunteer went to a near-by park. Sunny climbed the playground structures half-heartedly but eyed the park's beautiful soccer field constantly.

Practice was just ending, and a father was kicking a soccer ball with his three young children. When his kids lost interest and ran off to play, Sunny asked if she could approach the man and see if he would kick the ball to her.

Under the watchful eye of the volunteer, Sunny ran over and asked if he would practice with her. The dad responded "sure" and kicked the ball to her. Sunny stopped it with her toe, and kicked it hard with the side of her foot back to the dad. He smiled in surprise, and kicked it back. This continued for a very happy hour with the WN volunteer looking on in delight!

When Sunny's mom texted that her appointment was over, the volunteer said that Sunny had to leave. The dad came over and told the volunteer that he was a soccer coach and Sunny had real talent.

Sunny beamed and said “thank you” and “goodbye”. She couldn't wait to tell her mom how she'd spent the afternoon, and what the coach had said!



## **Teacher-Tutor collaboration yielding results**

“He did a little happy dance of pride when I told him the results,” the classroom teacher told us. She was talking about a Winter Nights first-grader who had missed almost all of kindergarten, and was way behind his classmates. With parental permission and participation, our team of tutors coordinated with his classroom teacher, identifying his specific needs.

We each applied our favorite methods and tools-- isolation (working one- on-one beneath the table), gaming, iPad apps, “add up the goldfish crackers

correctly and you may eat them”, and more.

The outcome to date: between September (before Winter Nights opened) and mid-November, written alphabet went from 3 out of 26 letters to 15 out of 26, and initial consonant isolation went from 1 out of 5 to a score of 5 out of 5. His math results were similar.

“He’s just a sponge for learning. I hope his family can get housed soon, but I’d also like to see how far he can go with more of this teacher-tutor collaboration,” one of the tutors said

A mother and father, with a 9 year-old child, have found housing with the help of relatives out-of-state. Both parents are employed, but lost their rental situation. They found that renting again in Contra Costa was too expensive. (They shared a home, paying rent for years. But the owner failed to pay the mortgage. Foreclosure and eviction followed.) Their relatives offered to help, and after careful thought and conversations with Winter Nights' housing resource staff, they made the big decision to relocate. We wish them well and every success.

**Winter Nights Family Shelter is currently serving  
9 families \* 29 guests \* 15 adults & 14 children  
6 girls, 8 boys: Newborn to 16 years old.  
One child is special needs with a service dog**

We have moved to our 5th shelter site of the season.  
Over 10 congregations have hosted & cohosted, providing  
shelter, meals, activities and homework support.

## Writing Their Resume Brings Confidence and Success to Shelter Clients

*Jim Pfohl*



I began volunteering with Winter Nights about 10 years ago when I retired. My first assignment was (and still is) as a Traveling Tutor. That was a different experience for me after 30 years as an HR Executive but one that I thoroughly enjoyed. About 5 years ago, I was asked to work with clients on employment. I began listing available jobs for them, but quickly discovered that many of the unemployed adults did not have a work resume or basic knowledge about how to apply for jobs, especially those on-line. So, along with posting new jobs every week when I came to tutor, I began helping with basic work resumes for interested adult clients.

I ask them to fill out a simple one page template with their work experience in chronological order. We meet

to discuss their employment objectives, and I help ‘flesh out’ all the details of work history, job skills, job duties, dates of employment, education, etc. Our clients, although homeless, usually have a mailing address but if that is not the case; the Winter Nights’ office address is used anonymously on their resume.

I must tell you a story. Several years ago a client listed that he worked for a law firm for several months during tax season. Intrigued that this may help us explore job openings in accounting or bookkeeping, I inquired about his specific job responsibilities. He proudly stated that he was responsible for the firm’s outside advertising. Now, even more intrigued, I had to know just what that entailed...maybe ad agencies, newspaper or media ads? It turned out, he was flipping a sign on the curb that read “*Get Help with Your Taxes Today*”. Well, he was outside and he was advertising.

Over the past 5 years I have helped with 50 or 60 resumes. When the client receives the finished resume, I get a kick out of how proud they are of the document. They light up because they see their own tangible achievements, skills and abilities set to paper. A dozen or so hard copies, along with a flash drive containing their resume, are presented to the client in a professional folio. In it, the folio also contains sample cover letters, a list of on-line employment job sites and a list of free ‘work appropriate clothing’ sites in the East Bay.

### It costs \$952/night to fund *One Winter Night*

This covers 24/7 staffing, transportation of the children to school and parents to work, a tent/bedding/towels for each family plus the costs of The Oasis day center for family services. Lives are changed *One Winter Night* at a time.

*One Winter Night* is a volunteer effort to raise supplemental funds for the **Winter Nights Family Shelter** to

- **Expand the number of weeks the shelter is open** beyond the first week in June to allow children to finish school with the continuity of their tutors. (2 additional weeks in June 2019 = \$ 15,000)
- **Fund a Parking Lot Program in East County for individuals and families with children living in their cars** (~ \$ 10,000 a month)



If you would like to support Winter Nights with a donation of any amount, checks can be made out to **Winter Nights** (with *One Winter Night* in the memo) & sent to:

Winter Nights Family Shelter  
1543 Sunnyvale Ave.  
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Online donations can be made at <https://cccwinternights.org/contribute/one-winter-night/>  
Email us at [OneWinterNight@CCCWinterNights.org](mailto:OneWinterNight@CCCWinterNights.org)

**Winter Nights Family Shelter** is a program of the **Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County (ICCCC)**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit.  
Tax ID # 94-1693225 Donations are tax deductible, and no goods or services are provided in exchange for a donation.