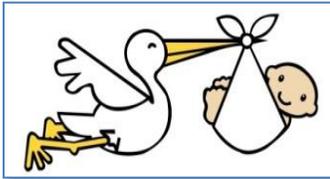




The **GOOD NEWS** Letter

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

MARCH 2019



It's a Boy!

A son was born to a family at the shelter in early March. His name is Marell, and he was 9 pounds and 19 inches. A happy, healthy bundle of joy. Mom (and Dad) are doing well and his siblings are delighted too.

Winter Nights provided a few nights in a motel for mother and child to rest up before returning to the shelter. One more Winter Night's mom is expecting in late March.

NEWS from the Shelter

All Wet at WCUMC

Walnut Creek United Methodist Church has not hosted Winter Nights for a few years. This year they resumed the challenge and went one better. They installed a shower specifically for Winter Night's guests. It is a temporary fixture in a large bathroom by the kitchen. Drain and plumbing access existed and the plastic shower stall was connected to it. Thank you, Judith Hall and everyone at WCUMC.

Winter Nights' guests are always so happy to have access to a shower on the premises.



Award winning Science project

One of our ten-year-old guests decided to do her science project on the effect of temperature on water volume. She wanted to simulate the effect of climate change on the oceans, because water expands as it heats. She planned her experiment using a light bulb to heat water in a plastic bottle, and a straw and ruler to measure how high the water rose as it was heated. Several of our tutors collected the necessary materials and took pictures of the water level at various temperatures. (Full disclosure: We have a lot of fun doing these projects with the kids.) She took the project to school, and came back so excited and proud that she had won third place in her grade's science fair. We were thrilled, too. ~*The Traveling Tutors*



Employment

Jim Pfohl, Winter Nights Employment and GED coordinator, helped a single mother refresh her resume for a position as a Legal Secretary. She had many employment opportunities in the San Francisco and Oakland area, but hoped for work locally because of her kids in school. Last week she proudly announced that she was hired by a Walnut Creek law firm at a very good salary. She told staff to let Jim know because he was such a big help.

Jim also announced that by making shelter guests aware of other employment opportunities, 2 parents applied for, and got, better paying jobs this month.



Winter Nights Family Shelter is currently serving

7 families * 25 guests * 11 adults & 14 children

7 girls, 7 boys: Newborns to 16 years old.

One child is on the autistic spectrum.

One more baby due in March

The Parking Lot Program continues through April 30th

serving individuals and families living in their cars.

There are 2 families with children, a man in his 70's recovering from surgery, and a man in his 20's working 6 days a week.

A Family Dance Workshop for Kids and Parents

Yukie Fujimoto

On two Saturdays in February, Yukie Fujimoto brought her skills and love of dance to the Winter Nights Family Shelter. She is a long time dinner team volunteer and Artistic Director of [ALL THE RIGHT MOVES](#) at Oakland's Boys and Girls Club and Chairwoman of [Art Moves Project](#) Lamorinda Arts Council. Photos are by Iris Smiley. Her work has been on display at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Pleasant Hill, one of our host sites.

When I walk into a room full of unknowns, my lesson plan in hand, I keep my body/mind open, clear and receptive. I have a ritual where I lay on the floor, stretch, wriggle my body so that I feel connected and grounded in whatever space I am occupying. It must look unusual to see an adult lying on the floor, but dancers are used to stares. I am here to conduct a dance workshop for the children and parents of Winter Nights. As assistants I have Abby, a 14 year old freshman who loves to dance, my son, Ren, a 12 year old sixth grader who loves sports and video games and one of his best buddies, Cameron, who is a budding actor and fellow video game player. Before the families arrive, I walk this mish mosh of a group through my lesson plan. All seem a touch nervous and unsure. It is their first ever outreach in this community. I know they will be fine.



Imani, a vibrant 7 year old spirit, joins us. Her mother, who is expecting a baby soon, sits quietly at a table, intermittently glancing over to make sure Imani is content. Victor, a shy and smiling boy of 9 years, joins with his mother and father. A family of volunteers joins too. We begin in a circle, introducing ourselves by our names and with a movement that represents our names. It's an easy way to get kids and adults to do something that they can easily identify with and not feel intimidated by the word *dance*. In two short hours, strangers and the unknown, come together. We share ideas, share movements and perform our choreography to random pieces of music.



A safe space to roll on the floor can be a luxury for some families. Expressing emotions and ideas with their bodies, sharing weight and partnering with others can be a big ask. However, when given these opportunities, I am convinced that dance can be one way children and adults build trust with each other and within any given community. This was evident as I watched Imani's face brighten, as her ideas were incorporated into a dance with Abby. Seen and validated, I could see her confidence grow throughout the session. When I observed Victor lay down on the floor next to Ren and Cameron, he was focused on a picture of a waterfall, softly adding his thoughts and movements to the group phrase. Boys like to dance too...

"Working with the kids was super fun! It helped me to realize how happy kids were while dancing, no matter what skill level," exclaims Abby. Our stay was short, but I hope our impact lingers longer. I am left with the image of Imani jubilant, running right past me to give Abby the biggest hug ever. The best reward any *body* can receive.



One Winter Night is a volunteer effort to raise supplemental funds for the **Winter Nights Family Shelter** in order 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 shelter weeks in June 2019, ~ \$ 15,000)
- **Fund the Parking Lot Program for individuals and families with children living in their cars** (~ \$25,000)

As of March 1, 2019, **OWN has raised \$24,700** in supplemental funds. This year's goal is **\$50,000**

It costs \$952 to fund One Winter Night

If you would like to support **Winter Nights**, checks of any amount 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/>