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Yolo Crisis Nursery to become standalone nonprofit agency

By **Anne Ternus-Bellamy**

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When EMQ FamiliesFirst announced last spring that it would no longer operate the Yolo Crisis Nursery, effective at the end of June, the Davis community stepped up, raising enough money to continue operating the nursery for the next fiscal year.

Donations poured in from all corners of the community, from Davis firefighters and local businesses, children's bake sales and private foundations, as well as from individual residents, all because they believed in the importance of having a place where families in crisis could safely leave their young children.

Now the nursery — which has been credited with saving hundreds of children from abuse or neglect during its 13-year history — is poised to become a standalone nonprofit agency overseen by a local board of directors.

The decision to become a standalone nonprofit followed several months of looking for a new host agency to replace EMQ FamiliesFirst.

That agency cited the cost of running the nursery, as well as fallout from issues at its other Davis facility — a Fifth Street group home for troubled youths that has been shuttered — in its decision to break ties with the nursery.

That, in turn, prompted the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery to mount an extensive fundraising campaign and begin the search for a new host agency. But Heidy Kellison, president of the Friends, said at some point during the search, the Friends realized between the community's support for the nursery and the able staff members who run it, there wasn't really a need for another layer of administration.

Kellison noted that most of the current staff members at the nursery have been there for years, including associate director Heather Sleuter.

“They’re already doing the job,” she said. “So we asked ourselves, ‘Do we really need someone else to tell them what to do?’ ”

Instead, they will be overseen by a nine-member board of directors, many longtime Davis residents and business owners among them. Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza and Gina Daleiden, his chief deputy, will act as liaisons with the Board of Supervisors, Kellison said.

The Friends have submitted an application to the Internal Revenue Service to secure nonprofit status and, once that it established, will take over the license for the nursery, which EMQ still holds.

EMQ, Kellison said, has been very generous in continuing to operate the nursery until the Friends could secure a new host agency and license and will be gifting the new nonprofit many supplies currently used at the nursery.

Located in a residential neighborhood in Davis, the crisis nursery served 259 Yolo County children in 2013, providing emergency overnight care, emergency day care, respite care for foster parents, supervised visitation, case management for parents by a licensed social worker and more.

The nursery has been credited with saving hundreds of children from abuse or neglect that parents themselves have said likely would have occurred had they not had a safe place to bring their children during a crisis.

The Friends said earlier this year that they believe the nursery can be operated on an annual budget of about \$408,000 — significantly less than the \$600,000 EMQ was spending. Between the \$100,000 raised through the One Child-One Day campaign earlier this year — as well as income from existing contracts and fees, grant funds and \$80,000 in emergency funding approved by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors — the nursery was set for the current fiscal year.

Now the Friends are looking ahead to the 2015-16 fiscal year and more fundraising.

“We continue to raise funds,” Kellison said, “and more are coming in even though we’re not actively fundraising.”

Donate by visiting <http://www.friendsofycn.org>.

Kellison, who will continue to serve as president of the Friends, called the turn of events something “that was meant to be.”

“I’m so impressed by Davis and Yolo County people,” she said. “Their support has been incredible. This is how you change the world.”

The new Yolo Crisis Nursery board is composed of the following individuals:

* Tricia Bosco, director of marketing at Axis Jet and longtime member of Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery;

* Vic Bucher, owner of Vic Bucher Accountancy;

* Dr. Kevin Coulter, a pediatrician with the UC Davis Medical Center and, according to Kellison, an expert in child abuse detection;

* J.D. Denton, owner of Fleet Feet in Davis and longtime nursery supporter (who purchased the very first rocking chair for the nursery, Kellison said);

* Jane Eadie, associate executive director of the Cal Aggie Alumni Association at UC Davis;

* Becky Heard, director of parent and family programs at UC Davis and a founding member of the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery, who will be the board president;

* Liz Malinoff, co-owner of University Honda and longtime member of the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery;

* Judy Wolf, retired UC Davis Medical Center administrator, incoming Davis Rotary Club president and longtime nursery supporter; and

* Jamima Wolk, director of marketing and business development with Stratovan Corp.

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