



Project Night Night

## ***What is Project Night Night?***

Founded in 2005, Project Night Night (PNN) is an award-winning Bay Area-based nonprofit organization that equips children ages 0-12 living in homeless and low-income situations with the essentials they need to be ready to learn, to feel less stressed, and to be reminded of their value. While meeting the immediate needs of disadvantaged children, Project Night Night also sets a foundation for lasting change by providing meaningful, hands-on volunteer opportunities to hundreds of individuals and organizations each year.

## ***How Did Project Night Night Get Started?***

It began with a basic observation.

Kendra Stitt Robins was on vacation with her husband Billy and their then one-year-old son, Cole. The couple loved taking Cole on trips, but it came at a cost. When he was disoriented being away from home, in a hotel room or a friend's house, he didn't sleep well. And when he didn't sleep well, his parents didn't sleep, and that night and the next day were miserable for everyone involved. Through classic parental trial-and-error, Kendra discovered the key: Cole's blanket, stuffed monkey, and the 1001<sup>st</sup> reading of Goodnight Moon.

With these comfort items and a nighttime book reading ritual, Cole slept soundly and contentedly no matter where he travelled. It occurred to Kendra that this might not be the case for those without permanent homes, without access to comfort items, and without books to lull them to sleep. Worse yet, what if the children used to own these items, but when they fled with a parent to a domestic violence shelter, their precious nighttime items were left behind?

Over dinner that night, Kendra discussed the problem with her husband, Billy. "Homeless children need to have the kind of comfort that Cole has. I want to give every single one of them a blanket and a stuffed animal so they aren't scared when they get to the shelter." Kendra and Billy discussed it for awhile. The idea didn't seem grand or revolutionary. It seemed practical and obvious. "Maybe," she said to her husband, "it's just that simple."

She decided to add another element to the package: a book.

With study after study stressing the importance of early childhood literacy, the addition made sense.

Through her work as a corporate lawyer, Kendra had worked on numerous pro bono projects to set up non-profit organizations. Those assignments had resonated with her beyond the requisite paperwork, stoking a desire to do something herself. In 2005, shortly before Cole turned 2, Kendra opted to be a mom and a non-profit founder full-time.

Her simple idea soon resonated far beyond the Bay Area, into living rooms, and into boardrooms. Kendra tapped her network of college and professional friends to get involved and those friends in turn involved their own friends, neighbors and colleagues. From Girl Scout Troops to Fortune 500 corporate retreats, she armed groups of volunteers with the tools to assemble Night Night Packages.

Today, Project Night Night distributes 35,000 of those packages annually with the assistance of over 10,000 volunteers a year. Since 2005, the organization has served almost 250,000 homeless children in an effort to reduce stress and provide access to high-quality literacy materials.

### ***What's a Night Night Package?***

Each Night Night Package contains a blanket, a book and a stuffed animal, all in a special tote bag. Each bag is designed to be age appropriate, up to pre-teen boys and girls.

Night Night Packages are tailor-made to give homeless and underserved children familiar objects of comfort to reduce stress and to strengthen the trust bond between the caregiver (the shelter) and the recipient (the child).

In addition, Project Night Night places 35,000 new books into the hands of children every year. Children's book distribution programs such as Project Night Night's were created to provide greater access to high-quality, age-appropriate reading materials for children from low-income homes as one effort to address the achievement gap.

Project Night Night strives to give children something they can call their own, something that can give them that little bit of comfort, and confidence, to deal with what's in front of them.

## ***Who's Behind Project Night Night?***

### Key Staff

**Kendra Stitt Robins** is the executive director and founder of Project Night Night, a mother, and a lawyer. Educated at Georgetown University, where she earned a bachelor's, master's and law degree, she worked as a lawyer in San Francisco after graduation. Kendra left her firm in 2004 to run Project Night Night.

**Jessica Silverman Bryan** is the deputy director of Project Night. Her responsibilities include managing the organization's volunteer base and the corresponding Adopt a Night Night Package program. Jessica earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Middlebury College and worked in development and event planning roles at Harvard University and the University of Michigan's Stephen M. Ross School of Business before joining Project Night Night.

### Volunteers

Kendra assembled a volunteer board of directors comprised of women across the country committed to fighting homelessness and promoting health and literacy for children whom the system has largely forgotten.

Beyond Kendra and Jessica, Project Night Night's board of directors is comprised of women and mothers from across the country. Perhaps most importantly, there are thousands of volunteers who regularly organize and host Night Night Package assemblies, where friends and colleagues gather to put together totes for local shelters.

### **Quick Facts**

- 35,000 Night Night Packages are donated each year to homeless children
- 35,000 children's books annually reach children in need
- 10,000 volunteers each year donate their time and efforts to assist Project Night Night
- Project Night Night has served over 250,000 homeless children since our founding in 2005

### **Award-Winning Work**

- 2018 Top-Rated Nonprofit from Great Nonprofits
- 2017 Top-Rated Nonprofit from Great Nonprofits

- 2016 Top-Rated Nonprofit from Great Nonprofits
- 2015 Top-Rated Nonprofit from Great Nonprofits
- 2014 A-List Award Runner-Up for Best Bay Area Charity
- 2014 Tea Collection Inspiring Mom Winner for founder Kendra Robins
- 2013 A-List Award Winner for Best Bay Area Charity
- 2011 Classic Woman Award from Traditional Home Magazine
- 2010 Top 25 children's charities in the country, Babble.com
- 2010 "A Charity You Love" by 7x7 Magazine
- 2009 People Magazine and MLB "All Star Among Us"
- 2009 "Most Awww-Inspiring Charity" by San Francisco Bay Guardian
- 2006 "Best Children's Charity" by San Francisco Magazine.

### ***Shelter References***

Sharon Bechtol  
 Homeless Prenatal Program  
 2500 18th Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94109  
 415-546-6756  
 SharonBechtol@homelessprenatal.org

Jane Schisgal  
 Clara House  
 111 Page Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94102  
 415-863-0681 x 2  
 chdirector@compass-sf.org

**Interviews:** Kendra Stitt Robins, Founder and  
 Executive Director of Project Night Night

**Media Contact:** Kendra Stitt Robins  
 Project Night Night  
 415.310.0360  
 Kendra@ProjectNightNight.org

**Mailing Address:** 148 Beulah Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94117  
 FEDERAL TAX ID# 202877016

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