

**Project Night Night
By Chelsea Eiben
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No child should feel scared. Especially a child who is homeless. Project Night Night (PNN) is a multi-award winning nonprofit organization, receiving over 11 awards since they began 12 years ago in 2005. PNN provides care bags for homeless children (between six and twelve years old) with families. Each care bag contains a new stuffed animal, blanket and book. PNN has thousands of volunteers and have serviced every 50 states of the United States. The organization began with it's founder, a lawyer and Bay-area resident, Kendra Stitt Robins. Kendra noticed her one year-old son was unable to sleep whenever away from home, such as being at a friend's house or on vacation. Kendra soon discovered that when her son had his favorite blanket, stuffed animal and "1001st reading of Goodnight Moon," he slept soundly. Having familiar security tokens of home in arms and heart. Upon this realization, Kendra determined all children need these cornerstones to comfort and feeling of security, particularly homeless children. Kendra decided right then and there to dedicate her life to this new cause, positively changing the lives of homeless children nationwide.

When I first spoke to Kendra about her organization, I was treated to hear that not only are they helping children in shelters nationwide, but they are currently generating all their efforts towards helping children suffering from the two recent disastrous hurricanes, Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. Over 500 bags were instantly sent to children in Texas and they were working on sending more bags to Florida while we spoke. When I asked Kendra what her future plans were for Project Night Night, she replied that they would love to expand, but that would require additional resources. PNN receives numerous requests from the 825 social service agencies they service across the US, and are invariably occupied with high frequency demands. In San Francisco there are over 100 shelters and PNN services over 30 of the shelters. The organization relies on networking via word-of-mouth. They do not spend any funding on marketing or outreach. The feedback from shelters has been very positive, with ongoing requests for PNN bags.

The Goal of Project Night Night is for all homeless children to have the security of a new stuffed animal, book and blanket. There are between 5,000-10,000 volunteers (off-site). Volunteers are of any age, and are used to help make the care bags through PNN's Adopt a Night Night Package program. Every \$20 donation is geared towards a high quality care bag, each one containing only new items. All funding derives from individual and corporate donations. The volunteers are managed by Jessica Bryan. PNN partners with many corporations for team-building Night Night package assembly events which take place at their corporate offices. PNN supplies to low-income schools

as well as churches. As aforementioned, they do a fair amount of work servicing children effected from natural disasters.

Speaking with a decade-long volunteer with Project Night Night, Beth McKillop, I learned why Project Night Night is such an integral part of her and her childrens' lives. Beth said she likes the concept of PNN, it resonates with her as she has two children. She appreciates the "very profound security" the cause centers around. When asked what her most memorable part of volunteering with PNN is, Beth recalled seeing the look on her childrens' face when they first saw other children on the street in San Francisco receiving their donation bags. Witnessing what misfortune looks like on fellow children. Recently, Beth saw a newspaper photo of bags for children in Texas during Hurricane Harvey, and turned to tell her daughter, "See that, you made that bag!"

San Francisco has benefited immensely from the aide of Project Night Night and could use all the help they can get. As homelessness continues to be an issue in the San Francisco, it is more imperative than ever that people become aware of organizations like Project Night Night. The number of people on the streets of San Francisco is nearly twice the number in San Jose, and three times the number in Oakland. San Francisco ranks second to New York in homelessness. There are 795 people per 100,000 residents. The numbers show that the average renter in San Francisco spends 41 percent of their income on an apartment, lives paycheck-to-paycheck, and saves nothing for an emergency. These statistics demonstrate that the homelessness problem is not going to go away anytime soon, and the homeless children will continue to need some semblance of security – when all hope seems futile. I am grateful for Project Night Night and the positive effect they have on children in San Francisco and nationwide, bringing children a little closer to a peaceful night's sleep.