

THE GATEPOST

The Newsletter of Shepherd's Gate

Winter 2010



After months sleeping in a car, a family finds a safe home...



Mothers
and children
right here in
our community
are trying to
survive winter
in their cars...
but we can give them
warm, safe beds.

*Names changed to protect privacy.

Brenda* has been trying to sleep for hours, but she can't nod off. She stretches her legs and tries to rest her head in a more comfortable position, but there are only so many things to try.

Brenda's bed is the front passenger seat of a Ford Taurus hidden on a dark road in the Bay Area. If you weren't looking closely, you'd never notice the family crammed inside the car.

Her boyfriend Jeff snores lightly in the driver's seat. Brenda used to feel safer with him in the car... but lately he is what she's most afraid of. Brenda shudders. Last time Jeff hit her, their daughters saw it. She wants to forget their frightened faces, but even getting high can't numb the pain.

Every night, Ashley and Katie cry as they lie down in the back seat. Just 12 and 10, they're scared to sleep in the car. Brenda understands — she's scared, too.

In the dim light, Brenda sees her daughters — huddled beneath their blankets and clutching new stuffed animals. Yesterday, she got the girls some Christmas presents from a toy drive. She was embarrassed, but it was worth it. Brenda feels ashamed, knowing they deserve better — it's no kind of Christmas for anyone, let alone 2 little girls.

Brenda wipes tears from her cheeks. *Am I out of chances?* she wonders. Little does she know what the coming months will bring...

Continued inside...

OVER 25 YEARS



REBUILDING
SHATTERED LIVES

"And His name will be the hope of all the world."

Matthew 12:21

A family reunited by a mother's healing

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Brenda finally found the strength to leave Jeff for the sake of the kids, but it was just the first step. When she moved to Brentwood, a friend told her that she could go to Shepherd's Gate with her girls and get the help she needed. She called, and in what can only be described as a miracle, there was room available.

The moment Brenda decided to go to Shepherd's Gate, her relationship with her older children began to improve. Earlier, they'd been forced to choose "tough love," but now her children surrounded her with the support they'd always wanted to give. "They told me they were really proud of me for getting help," Brenda says.

Life at Shepherd's Gate wasn't easy, Brenda says, but it was just what she and her daughters needed. "It was such a relief to be able to put my girls to bed at night. The people at Shepherd's Gate loved me, and they loved my girls and made them feel special. It meant so much."

"It was such a relief to be able to put my girls to bed at night."

As she went to Bible studies and recovery classes, Brenda was able to be a good mom again. She realized how much had changed the following Christmas, when she was able to wrap donated gifts for her daughters and watch them open their presents Christmas morning. She knew she was finally becoming the woman they needed her to be.

Today, Brenda and her girls are self-sufficient, living on their own, and all 3 are in school. Brenda and her older children have built a good relationship. Even though it's been 2 years since they lived at Shepherd's Gate, the entire family is still very close with the staff who helped them get back on their feet.

Brenda and her girls are so thankful for the many people who gave their family the chance they needed to turn their lives around!



Restoring Hope at Christmastime



Carla McRee
Associate Director

For many of us, the holidays are busy but joyful, surrounded by the people we love the most. But for homeless women, especially mothers, it is an incredibly painful time.

Alone and stressed, these women are struggling to find safe shelter for the next few nights. Will they be on a couch? In the car? Or worse, on the streets? For women with vulnerable young children, the stakes are high.

That is why your help at the holidays is such a blessing. I wish you could see the look on a woman's face on Christmas morning when she is able to give her children gifts that she chose for them . . . her dignity is being restored, and along with it, her strength to face life's challenges. And as for her children, you are giving them one of God's great gifts — a healthy and whole relationship with their mother.

Your support provides so much more than meals and shelter — you give real hope to families in desperate need. Thank you!

*There is no greater gift than
a changed life at Christmas.
Thank you for caring
about homeless
and hurting
women and
children!*



The Facts About **FAMILY HOMELESSNESS**

Source: The National Center for Children in Poverty

- More than **1.5 million** U.S. children live in families without a home.
- Among those children, **42 percent** are under the age of 6.
- Homeless families are more likely to be led by a **single mother** in her twenties.
- The top 3 reasons for family homelessness are lack of **affordable housing, poverty and domestic violence.**
- The current economic recession and the housing crisis further increase the **likelihood of homelessness** among children and youth.

FROM MY HEART

A friend of Shepherd's Gate sent me this verse of "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," and said that it reminded her of what happens when women and their children come here. I'm sure I've sung this verse before, but it didn't really stick out to me until now:

*O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow;
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing.*

So many women who come to Shepherd's Gate have stories a lot like Brenda's. Sure, the details may vary, but they too have lived without a home. They've been beaten. They've struggled with drugs. They've worried about their children. It truly is a crushing load.

But what I love about these words is that those who are hurting don't remain bent low by circumstance. By the grace of God, people find rest and gladness. And that's what happens at Shepherd's Gate, thanks to your generosity. I don't think I'll ever sing this song again without thinking of the families here — or without thanking God for you, our dear friends. Merry Christmas!

Steve McRee
Executive Director

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Help Women and Children Find *Hope at the Gate!*

Brenda's story of struggling to survive with her daughters in a Ford Taurus may seem shocking, but she is far from alone. Here at Shepherd's Gate, we hear story after story of women and children forced to live in a car, or in a tent, or in someone's garage. We refer to these people as "the invisible homeless" because their homelessness often goes unseen.

It's no way for anyone to live, much less a child. But we know it's happening right here in our own community.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, families with children are among the fastest-growing segments of the homeless population. Families with children comprise nearly a quarter of all homeless people in the United States.

During the holidays, the struggle is even greater. Cooler seasons make survival more difficult, and loneliness and shame during this season of joy can become overwhelming.

The need is great — but so is the generosity of our supporters. For just \$17.31, a homeless woman or child will receive nutritious food, warm shelter, and other essential care.

It's such a small amount, especially when you realize what power it has to change a family's future.

Please consider giving

a special Christmas gift to help a homeless woman and her children find *Hope at the Gate*. With your help, they can begin a new life in the new year!

Just \$17.31 can give struggling families the help they desperately need to start over!

Be a Part of the Shepherd's Gate Online Community!

You may already keep in touch with old friends and new ones online, but you may not know that the web is also a great place to keep up with what's happening at Shepherd's Gate!

www.facebook.com/shepherdsgate
www.shepherdsgate.org/blog

Visiting us on Facebook or on the blog, you'll have front-row access to our latest events, photos, stories, prayer needs, and volunteer opportunities. You'll also be able to connect with other people who care about homeless women and children just like you do.

What a wonderful opportunity to get to know the faces at Shepherd's Gate just a little better — and to allow us to hear from you, our dearest friends!



Look for us on:



HOW CAN I HELP SHEPHERD'S GATE?



PRAY	SEND ENCOURAGEMENT	GIVE GENEROUSLY	GROUP GIVING	VOLUNTEER
Please pray that Christmas will be a time of healing and restored hope for families here.	Send a gift card or a new unwrapped gift for a Shepherd's Gate child.	90¢ of every dollar goes directly to help abused and homeless women and children.	Organize a gift or food drive at your church, small group or workplace.	Use your gifts and talents to serve others! Please call us or see our website for how to help.



Our mission at Shepherd's Gate is to meet the practical, spiritual, and emotional needs of battered and homeless women and children through the love of Jesus Christ, equipping them to lead a life of faith, hope, and love and to reach out to others in His name.

For over 26 years, Shepherd's Gate has been a place where women and children find refuge and help to rebuild their shattered lives. Whether they face an abusive spouse, the loss of a job, or an addiction spiraling out of control, Shepherd's Gate is always there to help with a safe place, meals, education, compassion and most of all God's love.

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