



Project Night Night

## ***How Did Project 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 at all disoriented by 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 board rooms. 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 25,000 of those packages annually with the assistance of over 10,000 volunteers a year.

When the Robins family moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan for Billy's graduate school studies, Project Night Night went with them. There, Kendra met Jessica Silverman Bryan, who now serves as Project Night Night's deputy director from her home base in Cleveland, Ohio.

Kendra also methodically assembled a network of volunteers who serve as champions and organizers for Project Night Night in their local communities. These thousands of volunteers ensure that the concept of Project Night Night lives in a special way in neighborhoods and cities across the U.S.

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

A Night Night package is a simple thing with a profound purpose -- providing comfort at a child's most vulnerable moment. It's about giving a child something to hold on to at a time when they have very little.

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.

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.

Every parent knows how inextricably tied their children's happiness is to their own and each year Project Night Night receives poignant letters from grateful parents.

## ***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 comprises **Jennifer Kane Kelly** and **Amanda Keith Dorian**. Jennifer, a mother of three boys, is a consultant to companies including Interbrand and Accenture, and earned a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University and an MBA from Emory University's Goizueta School of Business. Amanda, an attorney with Adobe Systems, earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a JD from the University of San Francisco.

Project Night Night also has an advisory board of women and mothers from across the country. Perhaps most important, 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. During the past year, volunteers have staffed events in all 50 states.

**Quick Facts**

- 25,000 Night Night Packages are donated each year to homeless children
- 25,000 children's books annually reach children in need
- 10,000 volunteers each year donate their time and efforts to assist Project Night Night

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