

Running to Help Fight Homelessness

By Cathy Tyson



Kristi Connor

Photo provided

Kristi Connor took her motivation to fight homelessness to the streets, well actually the paved path around the Lafayette Reservoir. She's inspired to do something concrete about the problem after seeing panhandlers in San Francisco, and especially a fellow living under a bridge. At such a tender age, the dichotomy of living in a comfortable home compared with those less fortunate really resonated.

Compassion is worthwhile at any age, but Kristi is only seven and a half years old. Her first fundraising concept was to harvest apples from her pal Ella's backyard and sell them to raise money to donate to a homeless shelter. After making a meager \$12.54 along with a couple of silly bands she took in trade, she and her parents put their heads together to find an alternative.

This poised, very polite soon-to-be second grader at Lafayette Elementary School discussed options with Mom and Dad, also known as Caroline and Kevin Conner, over dinner one night. Because Kristi likes to run, and since the family had contributed to friends participating in runs for AIDS and breast cancer in the past; they thought a fundraising run would be the way to go.

They were familiar with Shelter Inc. - a Contra Costa based non-profit that seeks to prevent and end homelessness by promoting self sufficiency, and with the help of FirstGiving, a secure portal for donors to give online, the "Kristi's Run for Shelter" was born.

"Kristi is a little girl that was born with a big heart," explained Caroline

Conner. "She has always cared deeply about others and wants to make the world a better place. Her dad and I are very proud of Kristi for coming up with the idea of the run to try and help others who are not as fortunate as her."

"Homelessness is important to me because I feel like everyone should have a house," said Kristi. "I have seen a lot of people in San Francisco and other busy cities asking for money and it makes my heart break. One time under the freeway in San Francisco, I saw some things that looked like a homeless person's house and it made me sad to think this person did not have any shelter, clothes, or food."

She and Mom Caroline are training buddies, and had already participated in the Rez Run and the Piedmont's Turkey Trot. The pair enjoyed Kristi's favorite breakfast of pumpnickel bagels from Noah's, with some blueberries on the side, and circled the Reservoir on July 31—completing the three mile run in thirty minutes.

"She was so excited I think her legs went into overdrive," said Caroline Conner, who reports that although Kristi's goal was to raise \$1,000, she reached \$3,000 with the generous support of neighbors, friends and family. Conner added, "We had fun stomping on each quarter mile mark and saying 'there's another \$250 for homeless families.'"

Kristi's already thinking about expanding the run next year. For more information on Kristi's run, go to www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/kristisrunforshelter.

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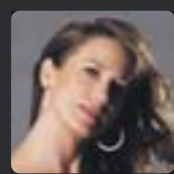
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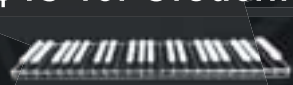


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