



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Rodney's Story: Volunteer Gives Families Lasting Memories

What better time than April, National Volunteer Month, to introduce Rodney Bates, a retired social worker who blends lifelong photography skills with a passion for helping people—especially vulnerable children and families.

This self-taught photographer volunteers for the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency's Nurse-Family Partnership in Escondido, which is a California Home Visiting Program. His labor of love now includes taking photos at home visits, program graduations and community events, such as Easter egg hunts and holiday parties with Santa. His professional portraits are his gift to the families that he watches grow and thrive in the home visiting program.

Photography has always played a role in Rodney's work with families in need. As a social worker, he snapped plenty of photos and delighted in seeing his work adorn the walls of their homes: "I would tell them, let these photos be the last thing you see



Volunteer Rodney Bates, above left, poses a mother and her child for a family portrait before snapping their picture and other special event photos, at left and below.



What is Home Visiting?

Home visiting is a voluntary program that pairs pregnant and newly parenting women with a nurse or trained professional who makes regular visits in the participant's home to provide guidance, coaching and access to prenatal care and other health and social services. It is a preventive intervention focused on promoting positive parenting and child development, with the ultimate goal of strengthening families and communities.

“Let these photos be the last thing you see when you go to bed and the first thing you see when you wake up in the morning. Remember what you have to lose.”

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This endeavor is particularly rewarding for a program like home visiting, he adds, because the relationship between home visitor and client builds over a long period of time—almost three years—with frequent in-home visits.

Bea Moniz, Public Health Supervisor of the county’s North Inland Region, has worked with Rodney for years and explains that his photography serves as a retention tool: “Rodney tells the clients, ‘If you graduate, I’ll come out on your child’s third birthday and take pictures.’”

“Through positive engagement the impossible becomes possible, the improbable becomes probable and the lives of parents and children are enhanced beyond



expectations,” Rodney says, adding that he admires how former clients continue to come to egg hunts and holiday gatherings even after they’ve completed the home visiting program.

While he gladly takes photos and welcomes the opportunity to “check in” with the baby and family, he is even more impressed with the grander impact of home visiting. “I see a lot of the parents not only graduating from this program, but I see them going to college and I see that because of the relationship they established in home visiting.

“Home visiting nurses are like a life preserver for some of these people, and the nurses will throw a preserver and then

another preserver, and if you don’t grab on to that preserver, they’ll throw an arm in for you to grab onto. That relationship, the side benefits that come about, it’s so incredible.”

To see more of Rodney’s photos, visit the CDPH YouTube channel’s HomeStory playlist.



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Photos courtesy San Diego County and Rodney Bates

What’s your home visiting story? Tell us at HomeStory@cdph.ca.gov