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BAY AREA FAMILY REMEMBERS INFANT SON WITH PLAYROOM FOR REDWOOD CITY HOMELESS CHILDREN

Family opens "Maxwell Soke Brenner Memorial Bright Space" at Shelter Network

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. – In celebration of what would have been son Maxwell's first birthday, parents Serena and Matt Brenner – together with grandparents and other family members from across the United States – today honored the memory of their son in a unique way: by coming to Redwood City to cut ribbons that officially open the Maxwell Soke Brenner Memorial Bright Space at Shelter Network's Redwood Family House for homeless families. Bright Spaces provide homeless children in shelters with a dedicated warm, enriching area to play and learn.

"Just recently, we both celebrated and mourned Max's life on what would have been his first birthday," said Susan Brenner, Senior Vice President of Bright Horizons Family Solutions, and Max's Grandmother. "We are so pleased to be part of this Bright Space, which will provide a vibrant legacy of hope, and countless hours of laughter for the many young children helped each year by Shelter Network. The Bright Space was made possible by a national team of early educators from Bright Horizons who worked tirelessly and with great enthusiasm to make the dream of a Bright Space in Max's memory come true."

"We are so honored to receive this generous and heart-felt gift in memory of Max Brenner," said Michele Jackson, Executive Director of Shelter Network. "The Maxwell Soke Brenner Memorial Bright Space is a special playroom designed to meet the needs of homeless children. It will become a valuable tool for children and families trying to maintain a sense of normalcy and routine during a challenging life situation."

Money for this Bright Space project was raised by hundreds of Bright Horizons teachers, directors and regional managers from across the country. Fundraisers included bake sales, walk-a-thons, and silent auctions from coast to coast. Even a Girl Scout Troop in Houston, Texas raised money and learned about the issues of homelessness, culminating with the troop earning a Max Soke Brenner's Memorial Bright Space Service Project badge. In many unique ways, Max's young life has touched the lives of countless people around the country while teaching them the importance of supporting children and families in need.

Bright Spaces Bring True Gift in Today's Economic Climate

In challenging economic times with the basic costs of living (housing, fuel and food) increasing, Shelter Network's rapid re-housing programs are critical to help families experiencing

homelessness return to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. The children in these families are particularly at risk for depression, anxiety and disruptions in their learning and development activities that can cause them to fall behind their peers. Studies have shown that children of all ages thrive when they have a safe place in which to explore the world around them, filled with books, toys and activities that are developmentally appropriate and provide an opportunity for them to discover the magic of childhood. Children experiencing the stress of homelessness especially need access to these kinds of child-friendly spaces in order to develop social, cognitive, gross motor and language skills, which are vital to their development and success later in life.

The Maxwell Soke Brenner Memorial Bright Space was designed specifically for the children at Shelter Network's Redwood Family House by early education professionals from local Bright Horizons child care and early education centers. In the Bright Space designed for young children, curtains have been put up and cozy nooks are strategically placed around the room to give children of all ages a comfortable place to explore. Shelves overflow with award-winning children's books, educational toys and games, and soft toys. A dramatic play area is set up so children can act out their dreams and learn to socialize with their peers.

The Bright Horizons team has also created a space at Shelter Network designed for Tweens and Teens (aged 10 to 18) with a computer station, tables and chairs for homework and art projects, a couch and reading area, along with outdoor sports equipment to be used at a local park.

In addition to creating the Bright Space rooms, the Bright Horizons team has assembled backpacks filled with age-appropriate items such as books, art supplies, and healthcare essentials to give to the residents of Shelter Network.

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About Bright Horizons Family Solutions and the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children

Bright Horizons Family Solutions is the world's leading provider of employer-sponsored child care, early education and work/life solutions. The company operates more than 600 child care and early education centers across the United States, Europe and Canada. The Bright Horizons Foundation for Children was founded in 1999 to help forward the vision of Bright Horizons Family Solutions to make a difference in the lives of children and families. Bright Spaces is a program of the foundation, creating dedicated play areas in homeless shelters. There are now more than 180 Bright Spaces located in shelters in more than 30 states around the country and Europe, serving thousands of children each year. More information is at www.brighthorizons.com/foundation.

About Shelter Network

Shelter Network is breaking the cycle of homelessness and "Leading the Way Back Home" for over 3,500 men, women and children by providing more than 180,000 nights of shelter and the comprehensive services they need to become self-sufficient and maintain stable housing. Shelter Network's proven success returned over 98% of our transitional housing program graduates to market-rate housing last year. For more information is at www.shelternetwork.org

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