

We've moved!

If you were in downtown Birmingham on the Saturday before Memorial Day, 2000, you saw an odd parade of luggage, big black garbage bags, station wagons and pickup trucks moving back and forth between the basement of First Presbyterian Church and the newly renovated FIRST LIGHT Center. The move itself was surprisingly swift and smooth. (Miss Jeannie only had to return once for something she had left.) Everyone spent the day settling in and eating fried chicken.

After the big day, Ruth Crosby, executive director, and Harriet Simons, then shelter director, spent several days figuring out how the building works, such as "Which switch goes to which light?" And they looked for the answer to the universal question, "Is that really a dishwasher (it only has three buttons!)" They struggled with which of the former shelter rules to keep and which to toss, trying to determine such things as when to wash clothes, when to shower, what time to get up, and what time to go upstairs to go to sleep.

By the time of the Blessing of the Building on Sunday, June 4th, most of the kinks had either been worked out or had at least been identified. Rules were written and procedures were developed. It was time to bring additional programs online. By the end of the summer, Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health and Retardation Authority's clinic was in full swing on the first floor, regular day programming ranging from arts & crafts to domestic violence counseling was in place, and Success Story had "quietly" moved onto the third floor for after-school programming in the performing arts.

It has been an incredibly busy few months, and the staff and board of FIRST LIGHT have learned two important truths. First, it could not have been done without YOUR help and support. Second, our work has just begun! ■

Granada Gala 2000

We couldn't have done it without you...

Thank you Parisian for graciously hosting the cocktail buffet and for an exciting beginning to our gala evening.

A special thanks to Quality Press, Inc. for providing FIRST LIGHT with Gala posters and programs.

We offer heartfelt thanks to Harriet Simons, Gala Chairperson, for her enthusiasm and the countless hours she gave to make the FIRST LIGHT Granada Gala 2000 a huge success.

We are again indebted to Rita Helton for her extraordinary work in organizing the Silent Auction and her untiring efforts on behalf of FIRST LIGHT.

A big thank you to our emcees, Greg Bass and Courtney Haden, who graciously volunteered their time and talents to FIRST LIGHT this evening.

Thank you to Christopher Griffin, pianist, for our foyer presentation.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to Diane McNaron, soprano, and Michael King, pianist, for the Masters' Cabaret.

Thank you to Courtney McGukin, sound engineer, for your talents!

Thank you to our gracious Gala Patrons: ArchitectureWorks, *Birmingham News/Post Herald*, Berkowitz, Lefkovits, Isom & Kushner, PC, Burr & Forman LLP, Parisian, Inc., Protective Life Corporation, Rogers Advertising & Associates, Shelby/Vesta Insurance Co., SouthTrust Capital Securities, and AmSouth Bank. ■



Granada Gala 2000

The Granada Gala, FIRST LIGHT's annual fundraising event, made a move this year, too. It was relocated from the Alabama Theatre to the Harbert Center. On the evening of November 17, the Harbert Center was converted into a cabaret with fabulous entertainment from the incomparable Diane McNaron who took us back to the days of Marlene Dietrich and Edith Piaf. The tables were decorated with centerpieces created by the ladies of FIRST LIGHT.

The real stars of the evening were our guests, Norma Brown and Delores Baines. As part of her own recovery process, Norma spent months working on a beautiful quilt, which she stitched with the help of her friends at FIRST LIGHT. Harriet Simons called it "The Quilt of Hope," and it was auctioned for more than \$1,000 at the Gala's silent auction. Thank you, Norma!

A determined Delores spent much of her time in the past few months writing to celebrities around the world to request that they donate items to the silent auction. The result was a number of autographed sports and celebrity memorabilia which added to the evening's entertainment and to the auction's bottom line! Thank you, De-

"Of all the things with which we are blessed, good volunteers remain the best!" — FIRST LIGHT Board and Staff

A Season of Thanksgiving

Some guests of the FIRST LIGHT Center share with us their reasons to be thankful. We'll hear from more of our guests in the next newsletter!

- My name is Jennifer. I am thankful for a lot of things: my children, my family, First Light. I don't know where I would be without First Light.
- Pam: I am thankful that I was able to get up this morning. I'm thankful for seeing another day, and I'm thankful to be alive.
- Jackie: I am thankful for my three-month-old baby. His name is William. I am also thankful for Miss Ruth and the shelter for giving us a place to stay until I get on my feet.
- CherylAnn: I am blessed with a wonderful life in the shelter. The wonderful people treat us like their own, and I say that being here is safer than being anywhere else. I thank God about everything: about not messing around with any drugs, having somewhere to lay our heads, having a healthy child (Cecil Barnett), my children Monika, Maurice, Essie, and Tommie being okay, Cecil being with me and God being there beside us, calling some of the staff "Mom," having people come here to feed us. Thank you all. God bless.
- My name is Sherry. I am 38 years young. :) I have sickle cell. I am thankful for the Lord being in my life and allowing me to see each new day (especially through all my surgeries). Miss Ruth is one great lady for all the wonderful things she does for the ladies here at First Light. The guards from Security Engineers, Bridgett, Cheryl, and Linda, are wonderful in helping watch over all of the residents and assisting us with things that are not even in their job duties. Rachel is one fantastic lady also. She has been helpful to me in and out of the hospital. Miss Ruth and Miss Rachel make First Light a lovely, warm-to-the-heart, safe place to be. God will always watch over them and keep them safe from any

harm. Thanks to Chris and Wendy for being there for all of us also.

- I am Debra Ann. I am thankful for all the things that have been done for me. I am thankful for the God who made me, gave me a place to sleep, eat, clean myself and who is raising me, healing me, filling me with the Holy Ghost, turning my life around. I am thankful for First Light and the people who help here with us. I am thankful for the people who help keep us at night and for the ones who come to feed us. I am thankful for the Lord and everything that everyone has done for me. I am thankful for everything that is happening to me. God bless all who help. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever."
- I'm Gloria. And first of all, I'm thankful for God being who he is because he has been in my life, always showing me the way. I'm thankful for Miss Ruth and the shelter that God allowed to be furnished to the ladies here. I'm thankful for the volunteers that take their time to come spend with us and for the food that is prepared here daily. I'm also thankful for having a family who cares for me. And I'm just thankful to be alive and to be able to see and be around for the holiday season. God still lives. And thanks for the guards who watch over us daily.

Bet you didn't know some of our guests are accomplished poets!

"Believe in Yourself" by Gloria
 Believe in yourself —
 in the power you have
 to control your own life, day by day,
 Believe in the strength
 that you have deep inside,
 and your faith will help,
 show you the way.
 Believe in tomorrow
 and what it will bring —
 let a hopeful heart carry you through,

For things will work out if you trust
 and believe there's no limit to what
 you can do.

"LeDawn Millennium" by Delores

Le Dawn Millennium is 2000 years
 old,
 Le Dawn came into a world caring, but
 sometimes often cold.

Le Dawn folds her hands to pray,
 Asking God for a brighter day.

With high hopes sitting on Lake Ella's
 park bench,
 Le Dawn sings, for who knows what
 tomorrow brings.

Le Dawns twinkling of her brighteyes,
 Brings bows of light to heavens sky.

Le Dawn is an outcast among
 the World, you see, because she loves
 and follows Jesus--it was meant to be.

Le Dawn's love for people is real,
 she cares if no one believes,
 because sometimes everyone gets
 lonely and grieves.

The morning dew kisses the ground
 without sound, Le Dawn and the an-
 gels can be found.

While cuddled in a cardboard box to
 sleep and stay warm,
 Le Dawn dreams of a new world with-
 out sin and harm.

*"Ain't nothing to it, but to
 do it!"*

— Maya Angelou

Need a speaker?

If you need a speaker for your civic meeting or congregational meeting, please call or e-mail us! We have staff and board members who are willing to come tell you about FIRST LIGHT and to share with you a short video called "A Day in the Life" at FIRST LIGHT. Call 323-4277 or e-mail Firstlight-

Top 10 Reasons to Volunteer

10. When you stay at home, you get too many tele-marketing calls.
9. Your family could use a break from you.
8. You might need help yourself someday.
7. It's hard to win a game of Solitaire.
6. Soap operas all sound alike.
5. If you don't go out each day, you get old.
4. Why let your boss have all the fun in life?
3. The car needs a workout.
2. Your Mom would be proud of you.
1. Who cares about money?

Volunteer of the Year

Each year at the Granada Gala, we have honored those who have made extraordinary efforts to make the vision of FIRST LIGHT a reality. Past honorees include the original founders of the basement shelter and appropriately, Rev. Eugenia Gamble, Rev. Susan Clayton, our former project manager Sherri Nielson, and our Volunteer Project Director Bill Matthews. Thanks to their efforts and the generosity of this community, the renovations of the former Granada Hotel are complete, and the shelter has made the move from the basement of the First Presbyterian Church to FIRST LIGHT. It has been a year of great accomplishments and great celebrations, but it has also been a year of transition.

As we all know, even the most welcome transition can be difficult and scary. The long-anticipated move from the basement of the church to FIRST LIGHT's newly renovated home presented many challenges to our staff, guests, and volunteers. But one very special lady, Ms. Harriet Simons, made it easier for everyone. Harriet is the best kind of volunteer, and she came to us during a busy period when we needed the very best kind of volunteer — she does not wait to be asked. She sees a job that needs doing and does it — from organizing the Gala, to staying overnight in the shelter, to sitting at the front desk, to greeting our guests and visitors.

During the crucial period beginning shortly before our move at the end of May and continuing throughout the summer, Harriet gave FIRST LIGHT her most valuable gifts, herself and her time—all of it—every day and every night to act as our Volunteer Shelter Manager. She started by helping our guests prepare both mentally and physically for the move and then lived through it with them. She became their friend, their advocate, their caregiver, and their beauty consultant. She embodies the vision of FIRST LIGHT by bringing love, hope, and enthusiasm with her whenever she walks in the door. Thank you, Harriet!



★Holiday Cookie Order★

The annual Cookie Project is in full swing! The Careful Caterers are once again mixing up some delicious cookies, and the sales benefit FIRST LIGHT! Individually wrapped cookies make great stocking stuffers and are only \$1.25 each. We also offer an attractive holiday package of 30 individually wrapped cookies for only \$50.00. It makes a great corporate gift, a beautiful table centerpiece, or a great contribution to the office holiday party!

We must have orders in by December 15, and the cookies will be ready to pick up at FIRST LIGHT by December 20. For an additional \$5.00, we will hand deliver your cookies within the Birmingham metropolitan area.

Celebrate the season and help the guests of FIRST LIGHT celebrate, too! Call 323-4277 to order. Please specify cranberry or chocolate chip. ■

Name our Newsletter!

This is the last *ShelterNet* we will be publishing. We'll still have a newsletter, but we've outgrown our name! FIRST LIGHT now provides so much more than shelter and food that we need a new newsletter name that reflects the love, hope, and community that we hope to continue to build at FIRST LIGHT. Any ideas? Drop us a note or e-mail us (Firstlightinc@aol.com) with your ideas. We'll announce the new name (and its author) in our next newsletter! ■

Mission Statement:

FIRST LIGHT, INC. works to provide emergency shelter to homeless women and their children and long-term housing to elderly and mentally ill homeless women while serving the neighborhood community and striving to allow all to meet their most basic needs while being offered the opportunity to learn skills that will allow them to achieve their full potential. ■

FIRST LIGHT Facts - Did you know... ?

- FIRST LIGHT opened its doors to homeless women and children on May 29, 2000.
- Before FIRST LIGHT opened, the women's and children's shelter was housed in the basement of First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham. It had been located there since 1983.
- Thirty-eight women and children can be housed in FIRST LIGHT's emergency shelter on the second floor.
- There are eight individual permanent housing rooms available for the elderly and chronically mentally ill homeless on the fourth floor.
- FIRST LIGHT partners with Success Story, a non-profit agency, to provide after-school care and to offer a performing arts program to children who live in Metropolitan Gardens.
- Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair (JBS) Mental Health and Retardation Authority conducts their outreach clinic for the mentally ill homeless on Thursday each week in the first floor clinic space of the FIRST LIGHT Center.
- Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair outreach social workers have offices on the fourth floor of the FIRST LIGHT Center.
- Metropolitan Birmingham Services for the Homeless (MBSH), the umbrella organization for homeless service providers, has an office on the third floor of the FIRST LIGHT Center.
- FIRST LIGHT still uses its partner congregations to furnish volunteers to prepare and serve the evening meal and to stay overnight in the emergency shelter on the second floor.
- FIRST LIGHT provides dinner and breakfast for its guests each day, and Birmingham PATH provides lunch.

Did you see...

The article about FIRST LIGHT written by Becky Elder in the October 2000 issue of *Birmingham Magazine*?

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*Remember
Someone with a
Special Gift!*

A contribution to the FIRST LIGHT Center presents a unique and meaningful way to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or other special moment in someone's life. Your financial gift will help us provide services and care for the homeless women and children of Birmingham — and it's another way to express your support for FIRST LIGHT while remembering someone you love. Your gift will be doubly appreciated — by the person in whose name you make the gift and by FIRST LIGHT! ■

FIRST LIGHT Wish List

Did you know...
that it currently costs approximately \$1,500 per day to operate the FIRST LIGHT Center?

- Underwear
- Feminine products
- Spiral notebooks
- Three-ring binders
- Sticky notes
- Lotion
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Bath gel
- Nail polish
- Books
- Makeup
- Games
- Cards
- General office supplies
- Disposable razors
- Deodorant
- Adult diapers
- Washcloths
- Towels
- Non-alcoholic cough syrup
- Cough drops
- Tylenol
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Rubbing alcohol
- Kleenex
- Clothes washing detergent
- Comet
- Lysol
- Dish washing liquid
- Dish towels
- Paper plates
- Disposable cups
- Disposable flatware
- Napkins
- Snack crackers
- Breakfast cereals
- Fruit juices
- Powdered drinks
- Fresh fruit
- Ballpoint pens
- Writing/legal pads
- Copier and printer paper
- Markers
- Construction paper
- Art supplies
- Socks
- T-shirts
- Pillows
- Blankets
- Bath soap
- Ziplock plastic bags