



FIRST LIGHT

A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

THE LIGHT

Spring 2009 Edition

OFFERING HOPE • PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY • CONFIRMING DIGNITY • ENSURING SAFETY • ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY • DEMONSTRATING HOSPITALITY

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Admit One

“Open Your Heart”

the 11th annual

first light gala

benefitting homeless women and children

saturday, may 9, 2009

doubletree hotel · 808 20th street south · birmingham

6:30 pm · registration & silent auction

8:00 pm · seated dinner, program & live auction

cocktail attire · questions? call 323.4277

Volunteer of the Month



October 2008

Melissa Williamson

for bringing our guests wonderful goodies on Halloween and working tirelessly on the Pancake Breakfast!



November 2008

Deby Wright
Marsha Harbin

for their energy, enthusiasm, and countless hours spent making the first-ever Iron Bowl Pancake Breakfast a HUGE success!



December 2008

Debbie Ramsuer

for volunteering on Christmas morning every year to deliver gifts to our guests and make sure their Christmas is special.



January 2009

Kristi Gilmore

for always being available at the last minute to come stay overnight and take care of our second floor ladies!



February 2009

Lakeshia Dunson

for putting on a talent and fashion show for our ladies and encouraging them to find the beauty within.



March 2009

Hali Ford
Kellie Homrig
Molly O'Brien

for making delicious pancakes for our ladies every Friday morning, and then making the kitchen spotless before leaving!

The 11th Annual First Light Gala, presented by Burr & Forman, will be held on May 9 at the Doubletree Hotel and Conference center in the UAB area on University Boulevard. We are excited about this new venue. The parking deck elevators will deliver guests right to the Gala celebration area; the venue will be a more intimate gathering space making it easy to keep an eye on Silent Auction items and visit with old friends.

This year's honorees: David Elliott is Honoree of the Year. He is a past Board President who worked hard during his tenure to promote our mission in the community and encourage financial support by corporate donors. We are delighted to celebrate David's past and ongoing support. We are grateful to David's firm, Burr & Forman, this year's Presenting Sponsor.

Birmingham Southern students who participate in the Bunting Center for Service Learning project are The Volunteers of the Year. For many years the Southern students have been dinner volunteers EVERY WEDNESDAY throughout their school year. These young folks come every week that classes are in session with food prepared in their cafeteria, but more importantly, with hearts ready to share with our guests. They play games, sometimes do karaoke or have song fests....whatever it takes to show the ladies a good time on a Wednesday night.

(continued on page 4, 11th Annual GALA)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
by Deb



The Silent Power of Presence

Edward R. Murrow did a radio series in the 50's called This I Believe, for which remarkable people -some famous, some unknown—wrote and read essays about their beliefs. National Public Radio revived this series in 2007, adding current personalities to the mix and even published a book with accompanying CD.

Debbie Hall, a San Diego psychologist and volunteer with a Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Team, wrote about the Power of Presence in her This I Believe essay. She believes "Presence is a noun, not a verb; it is a state of being, not doing. States of being are not highly valued in a culture that places a high priority on doing. Yet, true presence or 'being with' another person carries with it a silent power—to bear witness to a passage, to help carry an emotional burden, or to begin a healing process. In it, there is an intimate connection with another that is perhaps too seldom felt in a society that strives for ever-faster 'connectivity'."

During the holidays volunteers and donors come to First Light almost daily to bring food and gifts for the Shelter, for our guests and for those women we have assisted in the past year to acquire permanent supportive housing throughout the city and in Bessemer. People came to serve breakfast 15 out of 31 calendar days in the month of December! Every one of our ladies in apartments was "adopted" by individuals or groups for Christmas. The same family comes every year on Christmas morning to cook breakfast and the same volunteers appear at 7:00 AM to distribute gift bags to every bed in the Shelter and every Overflow guest. Volunteers appeared throughout December -- to throw parties, do haircuts and manicures, have game nights or sing carols....from girl scouts to law office friends.....every age, race, lifestyle and denomination came to be **present** to homeless women and children.

Presence. The totally unselfish giving of self to others. Ms. Hall says that while she is still pulled by the need to DO more than BE, she is "repeatedly struck by the healing power of connection created by being fully there in the quiet understanding of another." Thank you all who come to sing, encourage, comfort, touch...to simply **be with** our guests, not just during holidays, but throughout the year. It is more powerful than you know.



Budget-Relieving Wish List

- 8.5X11 white copy paper
- Blue and black ink pens
- White-out
- Breakfast foods:**
 - Individual pkts of instant oatmeal
 - Individual pkts of instant grits
 - Generic, bulk cereals
 - Fresh or canned fruit
 - Fruit juice

- Milk - 2%
- Coffee creamer
- Sugar
- Breakfast or granola bars
- Disposable goods:**
 - Plates
 - Bowls
 - Cups
 - Forks, spoons, knives

- Napkins
- Gift cards to Block Buster or Movie Gallery for movie therapy
- Snack items for group therapies
- Bleach
- Over the Counter meds
- Wash cloths
- Kitchen towels

Pancake Breakfast

Many, many thanks go to Deby Wright, Marsha Harbin and Melissa Williamson for initiating and co-chairing a brand new event—the first Pre-Iron Bowl Pancake Breakfast, which was held at the Lakeview District Golden Rule restaurant from 8-10 AM the Saturday before the annual Alabama/Auburn game last Fall.



Pancake Breakfast volunteers



Pancake Breakfast guests Chris Campanotta and Scott Ford, Board member

What started out as an untested fund raiser for us, ended up bringing almost \$10,000 to First Light! We had hoped to make half that, but due to Deby's persistence and nonstop energy, many businesses and individuals in the area donated door prizes and money to support us. The highlight, of course, was the grand prize—2 tickets to the Iron Bowl. These were won by Michael and Marilyn Gross. Servers for the hearty breakfast were staff and Board members, volunteers Tiffany Chiang and Maureen Cox. Board Chair, Blair Sandford, was awarded the Best Pancake Flipper award at the next Board meeting.

Thanks to the following groups for inviting us to visit and speak about First Light:

Prince of Peace Catholic Church	Homewood Middle School
Sardis Missionary Baptist Church	Homewood Men Striving for Success club
Brookwood Baptist Church	Saint Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church Gala
Gardendale Mt. Vernon United Methodist	Bumpus Middle School
Bessemer Kiwanis Club	The Church at Brookhills
The Horizons School	The Truth Seekers Sunday School Class

Miss Ruth is Back!

Wow! It was a first. Executive Director, Ruth Crosby, was out on a medical leave for a surgical procedure she needed. The shock of it all! Ruth has NEVER been away from First Light for more than a week at a time. Those of you who have known First Light from the early days are aware she even lived here when the guests first moved in. Staying away from the Shelter for a month was the hardest part of her recovery, we believe. Thanks to everyone who sent greetings, food and warm wishes to Ruth for a speedy recovery. It worked. She is happy to be back.

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"Bridges and Blankets" at Bumpus Middle School



colorful blankets

Yvonne Hardy, a weekend supervisor at First Light, arranged for First Light to be invited to the Bumpus Middle School, where she works during the week. In February Shannon Horsley attended a meeting at the school where teachers, parents and children spent an evening making blankets for our guests. The school is located in the Lake Cyrus area of Hoover.

Joanne Dickey was the teacher who wrote a grant to the Hoover Foundation and got the whole program started. Other teachers helping the TEAM 6-3 students were Carol Lollar, Lauren Powell, Brice Jackson, and Sharon Neal. The student curriculum included a strong effort to become

"bridge builders." The plan was to expose the students to all the areas of their lives where they could be bridge builders both in the physical and the metaphorical sense.

Shannon reports: 'The turnout was really great and the kids and their parents made some precious blankets for the ladies. Yvonne and I both spoke about First Light and how awesome we are. Some of the people there had heard of First Light before, but the vast majority of them were getting their first taste of First Light.'

Thanks to the parents, teachers and students who spent time building a bridge between young sixth graders and the guests of First Light!

6th grade Bumpus students



(continued from page 1, 11th Annual GALA)

Invitations have been sent to everyone who receives the newsletter. If you would like to attend and don't receive an invitation for some reason, please let us know. The Art Donation committee has gathered beautiful items for our Live and Silent auctions. We have photos posted on our website!

We look forward to seeing old and new friends at First Light's largest fundraiser. We need the financial support this event brings in order to sustain the desperately needed programs and services the social work staff provides to our guests.

the 2009 first light gala
is graciously presented by

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First Presbyterian Church
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You Are Invited...

the 11th annual
first light gala
benefitting homeless women and children
saturday, may 9, 2009

doubletree hotel
808 20th street south
birmingham, alabama

6:30 pm
registration & silent auction

8:00 pm
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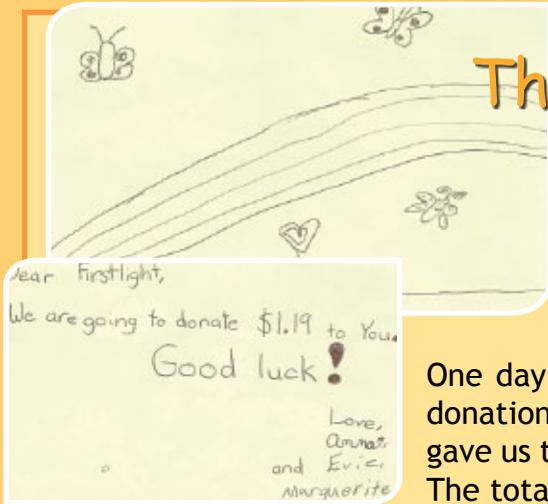
cocktail attire

reply card enclosed

FIRST LIGHT
A COMMITMENT TO HOPE AND DIGNITY

The Smallest Gifts Count

People might just make the mistake of thinking a small cash donation to First Light is not very helpful. We can tell you that every contribution is needed. If a lot of folks make even the smallest cash donation....that does add up in the end to provide significant support to our daily operations.



lemonade stand proceeds go to First Light

One day recently a gentleman walked in with an envelope which contained a donation from his daughter. Anna Spencer, Evie Whitsett and Marguerite Middlemas gave us their contribution from the lemonade stand they had operated for a day. The total cash contribution....one dollar and nineteen cents. Really—one dollar bill and nineteen pennies! The staff and I were at the front desk together when this contribution was brought in. It might not sound like much to you, but I can

tell you that this envelope was passed from staff member to staff member and each was touched deeply by the sweetness of this gift.

So, Anna, Evie and Marguerite...thank you so much for your hard work and generosity. We hope lots of other children and adults will be creative like you were, and think of ways to raise money for our special guests here at First Light!

Tidbits of INFORMATION:

- 7,990 ...the number of volunteer hours served at First Light in 2007-2008
- 1,040...the number of women and children served in Emergency and Overflow Emergency Shelter in 2007-2008. 865 were adults; 175 were children
- 104....the number of families served in 2007-2008
- 252...the number of women who left from our Overflow shelter to go to other shelters because we did not have enough beds for them. Some women stay 2-3 weeks on our floor waiting for a bed either at First Light or another shelter

Where does the money come from?

Grants: 43%
 Special Events: 23% (our own fundraising effort)
 Individual Contributions: 11%
 Church/Civic: 10%
 Foundations & Corporations: 7%
 Programs: 4%
 Miscellaneous: 2%

Where does the money go?

Emergency Shelter: 53%
 Permanent Supportive Housing: 37%
 Management and General: 10%

How can you help a woman in the Shelter + Care program?

Please call Deb Everson at 323-4277 before bringing large items.
Timing is everything— We don't have a lot of space at First Light.

Bed	Cooking pot	Spatula
Basic furniture	Baking sheet	Drinking glasses
Sheets	4-piece place setting of dishes	Bath towels, wash cloths
Blanket	4-piece place setting of silverware	Cleaning supplies and cleaning cloths
Pillows	Can opener	Powder laundry detergent
Small TV	Ice trays	



UPCOMING EVENTS



Birdies For Charity

Friends, once again First Light is participating in the Regions Charity Classic Birdies for Charity program. Making a small pledge based on the number of Birdies that will be scored could mean so much to your favorite agency!! Last year the three charities with the most pledges won **ADDITIONAL BONUS MONEY**: \$10,000,

\$5,000 and \$2,500 We really need your help to try to get pledges since it can mean even more for the agency if we place in the top 3!!

How to Pledge

1. go online to the Regions Birdies for Charity pledge site;
<http://www.regionscharityclassic.com/birdies/make-a-pledge.php>
2. click on the Pledge Here box.
3. Click the drop down box to select First Light for your charity pledge.

Note -There are no risks or out of pocket

expenses to First Light or any participating charity. All proceeds come directly to First Light. The Regions Classic handles all the promotional costs for this program. This is a tried and trademarked program that has been very successful in other parts of the country.

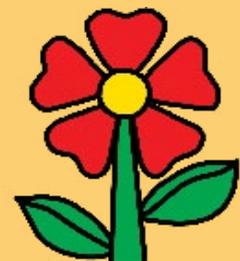
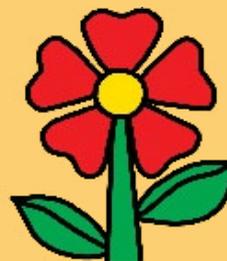
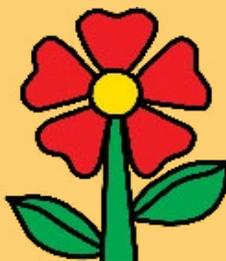
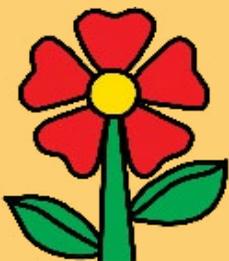
Let's assume 400 people pledged 2 cents for each Birdie scored and that final tally is 800 Birdies this year. This would bring \$6,400 to First Light. If those same 400 people pledged 5 cents per Birdie...\$16,000 to First Light!!

PLEASE ask friends and associates to join you in making a small pledge to First Light through the Birdies for Charity program. Pass the word along to all those who might consider pledging a few cents per Birdie. If anyone wishes to simply write a check to pledge—the check must be payable to Birdies for Charity to count as a pledge in the competition. You can send a check to us if you wish, but it must be payable to Birdies for Charity. The deadline is May 15, 2009 for your pledges.

Greeting Cards from Guests or Former Guests

The messages below are from five current or former guests. These words of appreciation are poignant reminders of why we are here and what your support means to the women we serve.

- "When things went wrong, you were there. When I lost my way, you helped me find myself. Your love, patience, guidance, kindness and generosity is without measure. Surely, you are living proof that there is a God."
- "Thank you all for being there for me when I had no where else to go. I am doing fine and dandy. P.S. Your light shined for me when no one else's would and I will remember that for the rest of my life."
- "To the First Light Staff, I just want to thank y'all for everything you have done for me. ... Keep up the good work that you are doing. You have changed my life for the better. Ms. Deb I still want to learn how to play golf. P.S. I am going to send y'all some pictures of me."
- "First Light, thank you so much for being such a big part of changing my life these last few months. I am so excited about getting my apartment soon. You all are welcome to drop by! This place has touched my heart and my life. May God continue to bless you all as you all have a great calling..."
- "To All Staff at First Light: Thank you All for paving my way towards a new way of life. Each of you had your own way of helping me in my recovery and I will never forget it!"





FIRST LIGHT

A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

2230 Fourth Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35205
205.323.4277
www.firstlightshelter.org

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Rev. Shannon Webster, Ex Officio



First Light Staff

Ruth G. Crosby, Executive Director
Deborah B. Everson, Assistant Director
Sherry J. Webb, LBSW, MSW, Director of Social Services
Shannon Horsley, Volunteer Manager
Sarah B. Greer, LBSW, Social Worker
Melody Jenkins, LBSW, Social Worker
Chaquita Pendleton, BSW, Social Worker
Kelsey Wenger, BSW, Social Worker
April M. Graham, Shelter Manager
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Deborah Jackson, Shelter Assistant
Therese O'Hara, Shelter Assistant
Yvonne Hardy, Weekend Supervisor
Carmen Taylor, Weekend Supervisor
Caroline Thomas, Security Guard
Marilyn Gross, Art Therapy Coordinator