



FIRST LIGHT

A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

THE LIGHT

Fall 2009 Edition

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

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Upcoming Dates to Remember

November 21

Pancake Breakfast from 8-10 AM; Lakeview Golden Rule at University and 29th Street

November 30

Holiday Lights program begins

December 22

Magic City Choral Society Concert at the Alys Stephens Center

May 1, 2010

First Light GALA, celebrating our Tenth Anniversary!

Volunteer of the Month



July 2009

Kiley Watson

Overnight volunteer liaison for Vestavia Hills UMC, brought youth group to plant in courtyard



August 2009

Marla Monk

ATT employee, volunteers several times per month



September 2009

Ann Sturgis

Overnight & breakfast volunteer nurse who does health in-services for staff

Pre Iron Bowl Breakfast

T

he second Pre-Iron Bowl Pancake Breakfast is scheduled for November 21, the Saturday before Thanksgiving and the Iron Bowl. We invite friends and supporters to come to the Lakeview District Golden Rule BBQ from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM for a delicious breakfast of bacon, sausage, eggs, and pancakes with delicious hot coffee, milk or juice. The ticket price for breakfast is \$7.00. And YES, YES, YES... once again we will be selling separate raffle tickets (for \$10 each) with the GRAND PRIZE of TWO IRON BOWL TICKETS. Second Prize: 2 hand-pieced quilts, one Alabama and one Auburn. Third Prize is yet to be announced.

A BUCK RAFFLE will be held at the breakfast with an opportunity to win some of the following prizes: a sapling from the tree at Toomer's Corner; footballs signed by Nick Saban and Gene Chizick; golf packages; dinner package; gourmet cheesecake and a hand painted cake plate to serve it on.

One special item to be raffled is a beautiful quilt that has been hand-made by Independent Presbyterian Church member, Barb Fillmer.

Tickets are now on sale at IPC, First Presbyterian, First Light or from any FL Board member. Call Deb Everson at 323-4277 if you are interested in tickets for the breakfast or tickets for the drawing. It is a great way to start your Saturday morning the weekend before Thanksgiving. Eat a nice breakfast with friends, have lots of fun and help First Light at the same time. See you there!



Blair Sandford making pancakes

Thanks to the following for doing volunteer work for our ladies or including us in charitable giving:

- The youth group from Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church cleaned and planted flowers in the courtyard and in front of the building.
- TWN The Women's Network is including FL as a beneficiary of their "Party with a Purpose" on December 1st.
- Protective Life had a golf outing and gave cash proceeds to benefit our guests.
- Protective Life IT Department invited us to speak in October and gathered in-kind donations.



*Protective Life IT presents
Golf Tournament Checks to Ruth Crosby*



*Standing: Chiquita Bracy, April Graham, Deb Everson, Lynn Shelton
Kneeling: Melissa Williamson, Deb Wright, Tina Fleming*

- Alabama Disability Determination Services had a week long drive called Get on Your Soapbox for First Light, gathering laundry detergent, soaps, cleaners, miscellaneous supplies for the Shelter and guests.



*Kappa Delta Sorority and Deb Everson
- Birmingham Southern College*

- Kappa Delta Sorority from Birmingham Southern College raised \$400 by having a "KD night at Rojo." Thanks to the members, the diners and Rojo for contributing to help our guests.

- Members of OneVision Birmingham did an art show and raised \$600 to benefit FL

My only concern was to get home after a hard day's work. Rosa Parks

FOOD

FOR

THOUGHT

by Deb

OFFERING HOPE • PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY • CONFIRMING DIGNITY



This image symbolizes what your support allows our guests. It is the counter where day after day, evening after evening, women come to the front desk for various reasons. They stand there to ask for:

- appointments with their social worker
- referrals to Pathways for clothing, or My Sister's Closet because they have a job interview coming up
- directions to the Library, Social Security, a physician's office, the bus terminal
- bus tokens if they have no job
- an umbrella
- jackets, or socks, or underwear
- aspirin, cough drops, antacids

They turn in paperwork from an employer or a hospital showing why they missed curfew. They come to ask us to celebrate with them that they were accepted into a drug treatment program, or found an apartment, or got a job, or have paid off their fines and can now move into an apartment, or will be getting custody of their children, or received their voucher for our Shelter + Care housing program. They complete pass

requests to leave the shelter for 1-2 days to go see their families over a weekend. Sometimes, they come because they are lonely and need someone to talk to.

The front desk is the pivotal location for most communication at First Light. That varnish has been worn off by weary hands and arms of homeless women plodding along to reclaim their very lives. Women have leaned upon that counter and worn it down to the bare wood. This is not unlike the state in which these women find themselves—worn down to their naked selves with little to protect them from innumerable obstacles they face.

HOW CAN I HELP PROVIDE HOPE, HOSPITALITY AND SHELTER TO FIRST LIGHT GUESTS?

On any given day, First Light is providing social services, emergency shelter or permanent supportive housing to a total of 128 women and children.

- \$ 19.26 provides one woman with shelter, programs and services for one day
- \$ 38.52 provides a woman and child with shelter, programs and services for one day
- \$ 135.00 provides shelter, programs and services to a homeless woman for seven days
- \$ 25.00 makes decaf coffee for our guests every morning for 2-3 weeks
- \$ 1000 provides overnight security guard services for one week at the shelter
- \$ 1580 pays utilities at the shelter for one week (power, water, gas)

\$25 provides 20 bus tokens /or/ \$50 provides 40 bus tokens.... for riding to doctors, pharmacies, job interviews, etc.

What Can I Do?

Lauren Swope decided to do something different for her 8th birthday, so she asked her guests to bring items to donate to First Light. Lauren and her friend Maddie brought the donations and got a tour of First Light. Lauren's mom says "The visit with First Light has opened up her eyes and her heart. She knows she is not too young to make a difference."



Thanks to Sara Chandler, Lulu, Emily, Frances, Harris and Carlton!



Lauren and her friend Maddie

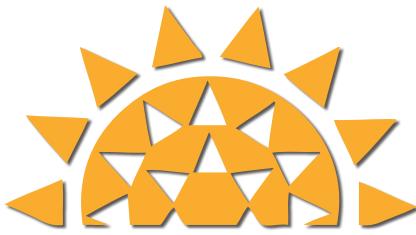
Six young women from Crestline turning twelve combined their birthday celebrations in a selfless way. They invited their entire 6th grade class to their dance party, but asked that everyone bring a cash donation to First Light instead of gifts for them. The students brought checks totaling \$997.00. Thanks to Sara Chandler, Lulu, Emily, Frances, Harris, and Carlton!

Holiday Concert Bringing Donations to First Light

The Magic City Choral Society, a group of men and women who love music and singing and want to use that to make a difference in their community, have selected First Light to benefit from their Holiday Concert on December 22 at the Alys Stephens center. Rather than paying for a ticket, attendees to their concerts are usually asked to bring some donation which is given to a charitable agency. Last year, canned goods served as one's ticket and these were used to stock the food pantry at Southside Baptist Church, where the MCCS Conductor, Dr. Paul Dease, is the choir director. This December, attendees will be asked to bring breakfast foods and various cleaning supplies for First Light's Emergency Shelter. We appreciate this gesture of kindness to our ladies and look forward to hearing the beautiful music, which includes both sacred and traditional holiday music. (Examples: Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, Laudamus Te, Holiday Reflection) See below.

**MCCS Holiday Concert, "Make We Merry!"
Alys Stephens Center Jemison Concert Hall
7:00 p.m.**

Come let us serve you up a dish of holiday humor, merry making, fruity sugar plums, and a flourish of holiday familiars. Special guest soprano and Broadway star, Emily Herring will garnish these offerings with a Blue Christmas, a Variation on Jingle Bells, and few other fun selections. In addition, come see a celebrity guest conductor lead the combined choruses in, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of Year," and the Community Foundation of Birmingham make a special presentation. The evening will end in what has become a favorite tradition, an all-call sing-along to "We Need A Little Christmas".



FIRST LIGHT

A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

Home is a place of refuge where we feel safe and find comfort, peace and rest. Our guests at First Light have lost that place of refuge and are struggling with the next steps to get back on their feet. First Light offers new beginnings and an environment that allows our guests to feel at home.

First Light continues to utilize a holistic approach to meeting our guests' needs with services including legal, medical, career, spiritual, art therapy and permanent housing. The programs, assistance and counseling that First Light offers its guests inspires hope and provides tools for recovery and independence.

We truly appreciate the time, emotional and financial support that you have given First Light in the past, and we hope that you continue to help these women and children in our community that have the greatest, most basic of needs.

Blair Sandford
Chair of the Board



There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort. Jane Austen

Last year provided challenges to us all. The economy brought new constraints to so many of us, and, certainly, this would have a great impact on individuals who had previously been simply “at risk” of becoming homeless. Starting in the Summer of 2008, First Light began to see more and more faces who were new to homelessness. Our Overflow Shelter began to be full at a time during which the census had traditionally been low. (Overflow Shelter is simply our Day and Dining Rooms converted to sleep space each night.) We were “overflowing” in the Overflow almost every night. This trend continued throughout the remainder of the fiscal year and continues now.

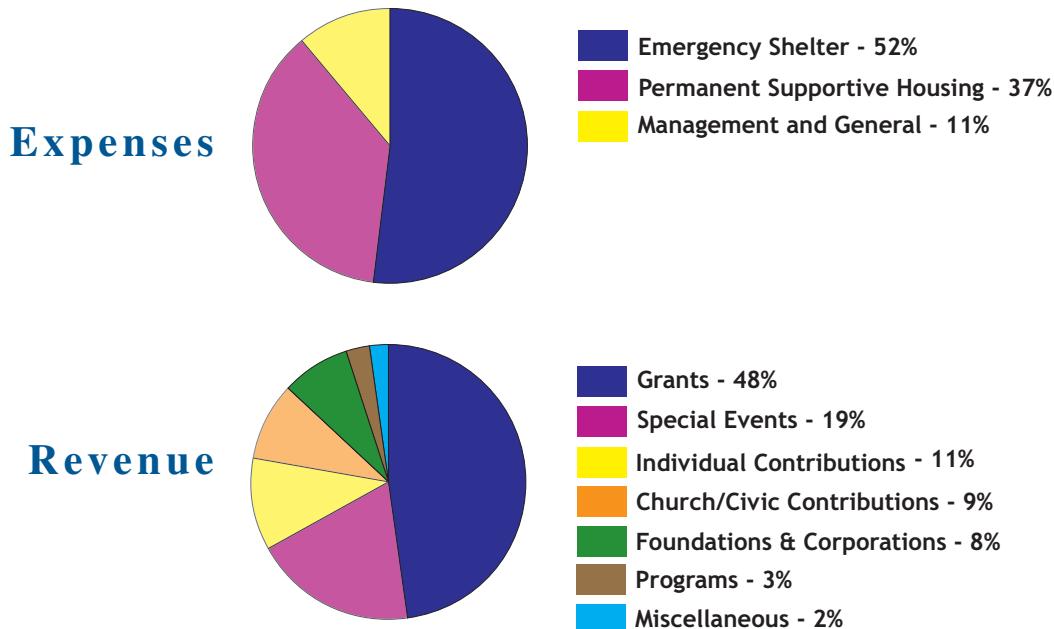
This change affected all of our services: we were feeding and sheltering up to 70 women nightly, instead of 50 women. Dinner volunteers had to prepare more food and First Light had to purchase more food for breakfast and supplies in general. Overall operations were being affected at a time when contributions were decreasing. In the interest of cost saving, we began to alter purchasing strategies and even invited donations of breakfast foods from our supporters. This reduced our expenditures for these items. The increased number of guests, coupled with increasing the energy costs impacting utility costs, services/repairs on equipment, etc., created new strains. Despite these realities, we have had a good year.

Good fiscal and practical stewardship, devoted volunteers, donors and contributors, as well as creative fund raising efforts coupled with strategies to reduce spending enable First Light to remain on solid ground. The mission of First Light involves making change in homeless women’s lives. We are here for them thanks to you, our supporters.

The real truth of the matter is that we are simply trying to send women home—where they can sit at their own kitchen tables and share a conversation or think about their day with a friend or a family member, a simple pleasure known well by most of us and probably taken for granted.

We try to be a temporary “home” while they are with us, but the goal is to send women to their own homes. Thank you for your partnership in this effort!

FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009



Our own fund raising efforts plus the generosity of our contributors account for 52% of our revenue.

PROGRAMS IN 2008-2009

First Light is so much more than a meal and a bed. Our commitment to our guests entails helping them address the root causes of their homelessness and the obstacles they face which keep them from living independently. First Light employs an approach that looks at the whole person as we provide programs and services which allow the ladies varied means of self-discovery. Whatever might open up a means of better communicating her fears, hopes, needs, whatever media which might reveal to a woman her own strengths and inner beauty such that it builds self-esteem, we wish to offer that opportunity for self improvement during their stay with us.

Participation in programs offered during the 2008-2009 fiscal year are as follows:

Art Therapy	523
Group Therapy	287
Life Skills	639
Movie Therapy	291
Bible Study	790

Art



Therapy

What is more agreeable than one's home? Cicero

Of the individuals who left First Light from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009:

- 99 went into permanent housing (84 last year)
- 74 went into transitional housing (20 last year)
- 151 went to the Salvation Army and other shelters (252 last year)
- 15 were sent to a drug treatment facility
- 6 went to a domestic violence shelter
- 9 went to a psychiatric hospital
- 9 went to a medical hospital

First Light provided hospitality, shelter and social services to 949 women and children in Fiscal Year 2008-2009.

While the above was being accomplished on site, our permanent supportive housing programs provided supportive services from three social workers: one for 8 women in the Bessemer program, and two serving the 50 women in the Shelter Plus Care program. All the women in these programs meet for group and individual sessions with their social worker. This supportive care element is the key to ensuring their ongoing progress and compliance to their case plans.

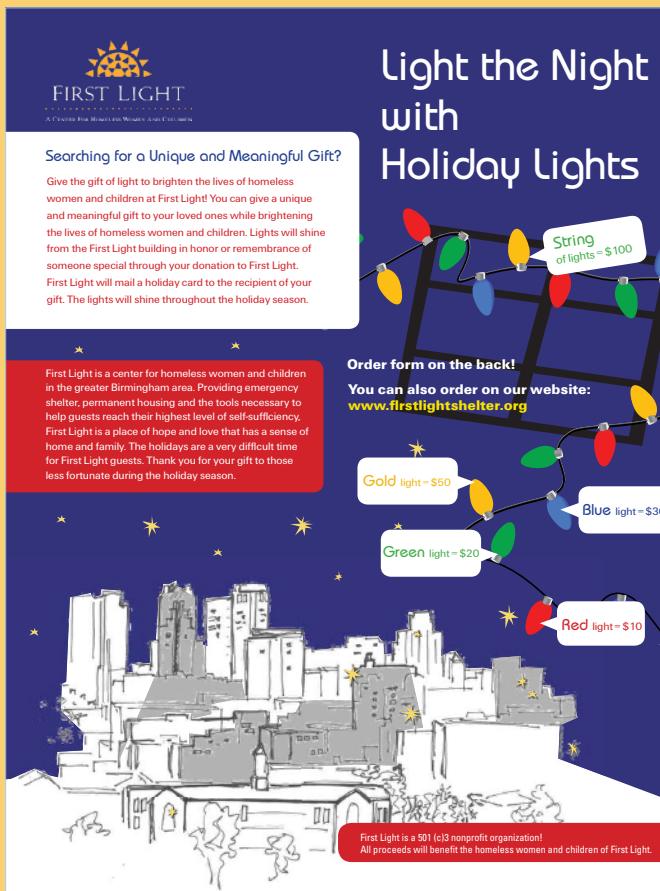


Peace, like charity, begins at home. Franklin D. Roosevelt

Light up the Holidays for our Guests!

The Holiday Lights project has been popular and beneficial to First Light for several years. We all have people we want to honor in some way with a gift of some kind, but so many of us don't really need gifts. Consider this great way to show respect for loved ones, for one's supervisor, for business associates or customers. This is how it works: Send a donation to the Holiday Lights program. Our staff will then hand address a greeting card that says a generous donation has been made in that person's honor, or if you choose to donate in memory of someone, we will send a card to your friend or associate stating a donation has been made in memory of their loved one.

Given the times, charitable giving is a beautiful way to do something meaningful for someone you care about and to help your favorite nonprofit, First Light, at the same time. We will be mailing the Holiday Lights order forms to everyone on our mailing list in time for Thanksgiving weekend. Please get your order forms in early so we can hand-address the cards and envelopes and have them in the mail before the holidays. If you don't receive an order form for some reason, or if you prefer, see our website to do this process online: www.firstlightshelter.org/donatenow



<p>This gift is from: Name(s): _____ 'Name(s)' to appear on card: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____</p> <p>Inside message reads: In the spirit of the Holiday Season a generous contribution has been made in your honor to First Light A Center for Homeless Women and Children The gift comes with warm wishes for a bright and happy holiday! [YOUR NAME] or In the spirit of the Holiday Season a generous contribution has been made in remembrance of [HONOREE NAME] to First Light A Center for Homeless Women and Children This gift comes with best wishes for a happy and healthy new year! [YOUR NAME]</p> <p>*Donor and Honoree names specified on order form. All envelopes will be hand-addressed. Your return address will be used. Postage and handling included.</p> <p>This gift is made in <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of <input type="checkbox"/> Memory of Name(s): _____ Send Acknowledgement to: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Red Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Green Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Blue Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Gold Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 String of Lights</p> <p>This gift is made in <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of <input type="checkbox"/> Memory of Name(s): _____ Send Acknowledgement to: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Red Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Green Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Blue Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Gold Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 String of Lights</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My check made payable to First Light is enclosed. <input type="checkbox"/> Please charge \$_____ to my <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard Name on credit card: _____ Card #: _____ Exp. date: _____ Signature: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I do not want my name published in the annual report.</p>	<p>FIRST LIGHT A Center for Homeless Women and Children</p> <p>This gift is made in <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of <input type="checkbox"/> Memory of Name(s): _____ Send Acknowledgement to: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Red Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Green Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Blue Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Gold Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 String of Lights</p> <p>This gift is made in <input type="checkbox"/> Honor of <input type="checkbox"/> Memory of Name(s): _____ Send Acknowledgement to: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Red Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Green Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Blue Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Gold Light <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 String of Lights</p> <p>Please return form with payment to: First Light 2230 4th Avenue North Birmingham, AL 35203 QUESTIONS? Call 205.323.4277</p>
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Farewell to Osa

Osarieme Erhunmwunsee (Osa) came to First Light, a young 19 year old, to work part time as a Shelter Assistant while attending UAB. Through all her college years, First Light became a second home. To lend support of her education, her schedule was altered each semester as her course load changed. She took a year break from school after graduating in Spring of 2008; but now she has started post-graduate work and it is time to move on.

To the rest of the staff, Osa has been a solid support base that keeps things flowing properly. Despite her youth, Osa learned early how best to manage the evening routine and meet the ladies' needs with a determination and confidence beyond her years. We always knew this day would come. She has now started taking classes from AUM in Montgomery, and it will be easier to live with her father to attend classes there. She will pursue a second degree in nursing and then move on to a Master's in Public Health.

Osa became part of the fabric of First Light. Each one of us knows that First Light goes on with or without us: it must. But we will feel an unspoken emptiness when Osa walks out the door that last day. She literally "grew up" while working here—lost her mother, finished a very difficult curriculum, and all the while remained faithful to loving and serving our guests and working as part of a team. To say Osa will be missed does not capture the feelings we all have. We have watched a teenager mature into a fine and capable young woman. Her presence has been indelibly stamped in our hearts.

Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened. Dr. Seuss

Facebook - Become Our Fan!

First Light now has joined the social networking craze. This actually has been quite helpful because we can post photos or a quick comment that is immediately accessible to those who are our "Fans." It is much more personal. We have created some photo albums that show off visitors or events here, such as the Stubb's BarBQue visitors in June. We can post a need that may get a quick response, such as the need for glucose test strips. We had the strips within 4 days!

So, please, check out our Facebook page at <http://facebook.firstlightselter.org> and become our fan! You will receive email notification when we post something, and then, if you choose, you can click on the site to see photos or investigate what else has been happening.

Breakfast foods:

Individual packets of instant oatmeal (no bulk containers please)
Individual packets of instant grits (no bulk containers please)
Generic, bulk cereals (like Honey Nut Cheerios and Fruit Loops)
Fresh or canned fruit
Fruit juice
Sugar
Breakfast or granola bars
Plastic containers of peanut butter and jelly
Decaf Coffee
Gift cards to Block Buster or Movie Gallery for movie therapy
Snack items for group therapies
Wash cloths
Kitchen towels

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Hygiene and personal items

(new and unopened packages only, please)

Cold, sinus and allergy medicines (nothing with Benadryl or alcohol)
Cough drops
Children's over the counter medications
Over the counter stomach/antacid or pain medications
Lip balm
Boxes of Kleenex
Note pads and pens
Small bottles of hand lotion
Travel size shampoo, soaps
Deodorant
Feminine products (tampons, pads)

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Please know that these are used on an ongoing basis so we ALWAYS need these items. You could consider gathering things as a family project or as a group. They can be brought to First Light on a monthly basis—whatever works best for you.

We are located at the corner of 4th Avenue North and 23rd Street in downtown Birmingham, between the downtown Post Office and The Birmingham News. You can park in the loading zone on 4th, and we will help you unload!

Wish list for a woman moving into apartment:

Skillet
Kitchen utensils
Flatware
Set of dishes (setting for 4)
Pots and pans
Kitchen towels and dish cloths
Set of bath towels
Pillow, Comforter/blanket for double bed
Toaster
Coffee pot





FIRST LIGHT

A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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www.firstlightshelter.org

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