

The 2015 First Light Gala presented by Medical Properties Trust, Inc.

Please join us for the **2015 First Light Gala**. This year the theme is *Here Comes the Sun* to celebrate how First Light brightens the lives of the homeless women and children we serve. This fun event will be on **Saturday, April 18, 2015 from 6:30 to 9:30 at Old Car Heaven, 3501 First Avenue South, Birmingham, Alabama.**

The 2015 Gala will feature music by *Rock Candy*, cocktails, great food by Happy Catering, dancing and a silent auction. There will be plenty of parking with valet service available.

- Individual Tickets are \$150

But consider reserving a table to ensure that your friends will be able to sit with you:

- Reserved table for four: \$750
- Reserved table for six: \$1,125

Tickets can be purchased and tables reserved online at www.firstlightshelter.org.

We work hard to acknowledge the generosity of our corporate sponsors.

For more information about how you can highlight your company's commitment to our community while making a real impact on the lives of vulnerable, homeless women and children, contact Lani Powell at 323-4277 or at powell@firstlightshelter.org



First Light Young Partners

A group of young community professionals want to support First Light's mission. They are our "Young Partners." Serving as an adjunct to the Board of Directors, the Young Partners work in a variety of fields in the Birmingham metropolitan area but they have come together with a common desire to help homeless women in their pursuit to regain dignity and achieve independence.

The Young Partners are seeking more members to join them in embracing this important cause. They are designing new ways to heighten awareness and raise funds for First Light. If you are interested in becoming a First Light Young Partner, please contact Lani Powell at lanipowell@firstlightshelter.org.

Gala Sponsors, as of publication time include:

Presenting Sponsor – Medical Properties Trust, Inc.

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FIRST LIGHT

A Center for Homeless Women and Children

Volunteering ...making a difference your own way

Volunteer work with First Light typically falls into one of three categories: Meal Volunteers, Overnight Volunteers or Activity Volunteers. First, a little background on the typical opportunities at First Light, then more on how it can benefit you and your family or group.

Meal volunteers provide a huge service to our guests and to the agency. First Light does not operate under a soup kitchen model. Our meals are planned, purchased, prepared and served by the Dinner and Breakfast volunteers. This is a unique opportunity to share your talent and treasure, in that it is an investment of time and money to prepare a meal for 60-70 women and children. Many gather friends or family members to assist in the food prep. Sometimes folks support a meal volunteer by baking cakes, pies or cookies for them to take to the shelter. The people who serve meals here come from law firms, banks, churches, you name it. Many are simply family members or friends who want to do something meaningful. Sometimes it is a crew of folks in the kitchen; sometimes it is two people just doing what they love to do. The meals might be vegetarian lasagna, chili, hot dogs, ham, meat loaf, pasta, fried chicken, turkey tetrazzini, etc. On Wednesdays when they are in session, it is whatever Birmingham Southern College is serving in the cafeteria that night. If Starnes Davis Florie is serving, dinner is barbecue with all the trimmings and pie or chocolate dipped cookies! The McIvers are a two-person team who value the time spent in our kitchen as a couple.

We also schedule **Breakfast volunteers** each weekend so that our guests can enjoy a hot meal to start the day. During the week they have a “pick up” breakfast – instant oatmeal, instant grits, pastries, peanut butter toast, fresh fruit... whatever donated goods may be in the cooler. We are happy to have a cooked breakfast on a weekday if someone wants to come in early to serve it at 6:30. (We recognized Gary Johnson as our Volunteer of the Year this past year for coming to make scrambled eggs every Tuesday for the ladies.)

Overnight volunteers actually come to stay overnight on second floor in the emergency shelter dorm area. There is a private Volunteer room where toiletry items, blankets, sheets and laundry detergent are stored. The volunteer greets the ladies as they come upstairs after dinner and hands them the donated items from a cart stocked with numerous things

they might need. She spends time with women who want to chat and at 10 PM, closes the laundry room door bidding the ladies a good night. After that the volunteer is on her own to read, watch tv or use our wifi until she’s ready to sleep. In the morning she awakens the ladies with a happy greeting and her service is complete. The importance of this role is not so much the tasks. It’s the presence of a stranger from the community who has given up her own bed for a night that really touches the shelter guests. You are showing them thus: the fact that they are here matters... they have not been forgotten.

Doing **activities** for shelter guests can range from coming here to lead a session of some kind, to have a party with the women, teach a craft or skill, to having supply drives outside the shelter or even doing a fund raiser of your own. We have suggested that people might be willing to sacrifice their birthdays by asking friends to come and celebrate but to bring cash donations or supplies for the shelter instead of gifts. Believe it or not, it has been children who have taken us up on this suggestion. There is a group of young people in their twenties who have an ugly sweater party every year in December to raise money for First Light. These kinds of things are left to your own creativity. Rojo restaurant had free hors d’oeuvres for two hours on Christmas Eve for anyone who would make a contribution to First Light.

It is perfectly clear to us how this benefits the guests here, both from a practical and a spiritual and mental health perspective. We know the women “get it” – they are not alone. Strangers are willing to share their time and talent to serve them and support them. Many of the ladies are quite vocal in their offering of thanks and praise of our volunteers. The benefit to a family or a group of individuals is not lost on those who come here, either. Energizers, Inc. encourages and reinforces volunteerism efforts in their newsletter. Here are a few thoughts borrowed from their President, Susan J. Ellis, in her latest “Susan’s Tip of the Month.”

Consider this potential benefit: serving at First Light as a whole family is, simply put, *“time for a collective activity - while also doing good in the community.”*

Further, volunteering can give each member of the family the chance to shine as an individual as well as to cooperate as a team. And that brings the benefit of showing each other



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Volunteering ...continued

something rarely seen by staying home: how family members behave in public and are viewed by others. Adults don't often observe their children outside of play or school, and seldom in a situation in which they are expected to use their skills for an external goal. Conversely, few children get to see their adult relatives from a new perspective; not as mom, uncle, or grandpa, but as a colleague."

"... Volunteering can be an important chance for other extended family members to interact with nieces and nephews, cousins, godchildren - whoever is important to them but they don't see as often as they'd like. Why not schedule shared community service time and get to know one another in new ways? It's often overlooked that older siblings, particularly if there is a big age gap between them, may be interested in pairing with their younger siblings."

Serving meals is not the only way for families or teams of friends or business associates to help First Light. We are challenging you to be creative in working together to support our mission in whatever ways work best for you.

- Have a party and ask guests to either collect items needed at the shelter, or, ask them to bring a check! Come as a family to deliver the gifts.
- Get the children to make or bake something and have a neighborhood bake sale project to benefit First Light.
- Do an ugly sweater or t-shirt party asking for donations. Give a prize to the winner and the participants' contributions to First Light.
- A group of young executive leaders at Alagasco created a competition between corporate departments one summer: who could accumulate the most boxes of laundry detergent? They delivered enough detergent to last us for a year!
- Do mother/daughter or aunt/niece overnight service

We know people want to help. Not everyone can be here at the shelter to do so. It seems like it's a win-win situation when you gather as a family, a class, an office group or even departments within a corporation to use positive energy in a helpful and productive manner. Put your thinking caps on and let us know if you need our help with your ideas!

Online contributions are easier than ever.

First Light serves women who have been surviving on the streets and those who have recently become homeless. We give them emergency shelter and essential social services, which can lead to full independence later. The task is monumental and we need your help. Your contribution does make a difference.

So, where does your money go? Of our expenditures in fiscal year 2013-2014:

- 90% were emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing expenses
- 7.7% were management and general expenses
- 1.3% were fundraising expenses

175 emergency shelter guests were placed in either transitional or permanent housing settings, and all guests received a mental health assessment and appropriate referrals. We could not do this without YOUR support.

The image below is a shot from our **Donate Now** page on the website—you can elect to make a contribution in honor of, in memory of, have a greeting card mailed, or simply make a donation. Your online contribution can be made using your Visa, MasterCard or Discover card. Finally, if you wish, you can make an automatic recurring monthly contribution. All this is done securely, without leaving our website.

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