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# FIRST LIGHT

The Mission Center of First Presbyterian Church

2230 Fourth Avenue North  
Birmingham, Alabama 35203  
(205) 323-4277

website: <http://firstlight.digitrends.com/shelter>

July 16, 2004

First Light needs your help. We have been blessed with many gifts from our friends since our days in the basement shelter of First Presbyterian Church. The number of homeless women and children began to increase drastically when we opened the doors of First Light in May 2000. We need your continued support to sustain the level of services we provide to our guests. First Light is dedicated to our mission of helping those we serve to maintain dignity, find hope, seek opportunity and grow spiritually. As a result of the increased demand for services, we find ourselves asking for your financial support to continue to adequately meet the needs of the homeless women and children in our community.

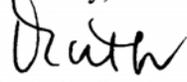
Let me tell you about Claire. Claire, a 64-year-old retired professional with a graduate degree, came to First Light last year after sleeping in her car for two weeks. Claire is a widow who lived on her own until she was stricken with Paget's disease, a chronic bone disorder. A majority of her small income was used to pay for her medication. She moved in with her son and his family, which caused strain on their relationship. Not wanting to be a "burden" on her children, Claire moved out of the house and began sleeping in her car. Claire's body was not strong enough to withstand the torment of living in a car, and she ended up in the emergency room. Upon being released from a local hospital, Claire was referred to First Light.

With First Light's help, Claire moved into an income-based retirement apartment and began receiving assistance with paying for her medication. Claire was able to find hope, to maintain her dignity, to re-establish her identity and to believe in herself again. Without First Light, Claire would still be on the streets or worse.

Claire is only one of so many. The number of homeless women and children served at First Light since our doors opened in May 2000 has more than tripled. The reality is that it takes \$40 per day per guest to feed, house and serve the 1,500+ guests who will walk through the doors of First Light this year. We need your support in a way that we have never asked.

We are asking for your financial support to help us meet the budgetary requirements that will allow us to continue to serve women like Claire in our community. We truly appreciate your willingness to reach out to those in need. You can make a difference!

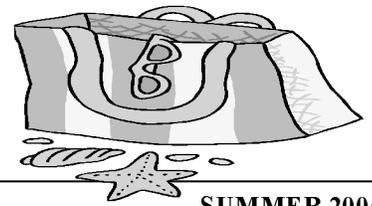
Sincerely,

  
Ruth G. Crosby  
Executive Director





# The Light



SUMMER 2004



The pony rides were a big hit, judging by this girl's grin.

## Bluegrass Barbecue



Clydene Dyer and the Magic City Town Clowns perform with Rollin' in the Hay!



New board member Blair Sandford models her new hat.

This summer's Bluegrass Barbecue was a HUGE success!! All of the kids had tons of fun, from bouncing on the moonwalk and face-painting clowns to bobbing for apples and pony rides, while the adults ate, laughed, and danced the afternoon away with music from Rollin' in the Hay. Our ladies here at the shelter did their part to add to the excitement of the day by making Glitz & Glamour Horseshoes in art therapy to sell at the party—many thanks to Marilyn Gross for coordinating the project and to Bill and Weesa Matthews for helping out with that display! With such an amazing turnout and enthusiastic supporters, this year's barbecue was truly an event to remember. Thanks again to Joy O'Neal for the use of her farmhouse and all of her hard work, Rollin' in the Hay, Ponies R Us, and the rest of our wonderful sponsors:

**Buster's Bar and Grill**  
**Golden Flake**  
**Gray Auto Service**  
**Hosmer Family**  
**Johnny Ray's (Morgan Road)**



Jonathan Hughes and a friend show off their painted faces on the moonwalk.

*Photography by Robin Wilson*

**Magic City Town Clowns**  
**Mayfield Ice Cream**  
**Milo's**  
**Super Show Productions**  
**Target (Trussville Location)**

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### BOARD UPDATE

First Light welcomes new members **Jeff Morrison**, **Blair Sandford**, **Nancy Turpen**, **Jeff Wilson**, and **Eukie Woodall** to the board! Furthermore, **Wendi Boyen** and **David Elliott** have taken on the positions of president and vice president! We will truly miss the board members who will be rolling off this year, including board president **Robin Vines**, former president **Denise Killebrew**, and long-standing members **Renee Driskel**, **Kevin Patton**, **John Porter**, and **Clayton Sherrod**. Thanks to all of these excellent board members for their great work, and we look forward to the promising year ahead!



Welcome, **Angel Hughes**, to the First Light team as our friendly new receptionist!! We're thrilled to have such a great addition to our staff!





# Art at First Light



## ART PROGRAM NEEDS

***Creative Adventures! Affirmation and Healing Through the Arts*** is one of the day programs at First Light and meets every Thursday, 10:00-12:30 PM. Several exciting projects have been planned for the new year, and you might be able to lend a helping hand! Our women would like to: 1) create religious symbols for the First Light Chapel, and 2) paint spring birdhouses to sell in the coffee shop, with proceeds benefiting the Center.

The **birdhouses** can be purchased or built, standard size, of any design, and constructed out of any type of wood. They will be decorated, painted and sealed by the ladies in art class, and placed in the coffee shop in the early spring.

The **religious symbols** can be purchased or constructed (or cut) out of any kind of wood, and be no larger than 12" in height with a hanger on the back in order to hang securely on our chapel wall. The ladies will paint and adorn them in colorful and meaningful ways. Here are some symbol shapes they suggested: dove, crown, angel, Star of David, ark, open Bible, butterfly, heart, cross (of any design), harp, tablets (to represent the 10 Commandments), Hand of God, shepherd's crook, sheep, candle, chalice, and loaf.

Another way to lend support would be to contribute a **gift certificate** (of any amount) to Wal-Mart, Hobby Lobby, or Alabama Art Supply. Art and craft materials for projects can be purchased at reasonable prices at these locations.

Or perhaps you can come and **help us paint** one day! Birdhouses and symbols can be dropped off at First Light at any time. Please contact Marilyn Gross, 822-0686, Art Therapy Coordinator, for more information.

Anytime you are at the First Light Center, stop and view the artwork hanging in the **Women's Art Gallery** on the first floor. You will be so proud of their creative efforts. The gallery was made possible by the generous support of the Junior League of Birmingham.

### Need a speaker ?

If you need a speaker for your civic meeting, congregational meeting or organization, please call or e-mail us! We have staff that would love to tell you about all of the wonderful things happening at First Light. Call 323-4277 or e-mail fishelter@aol.com.

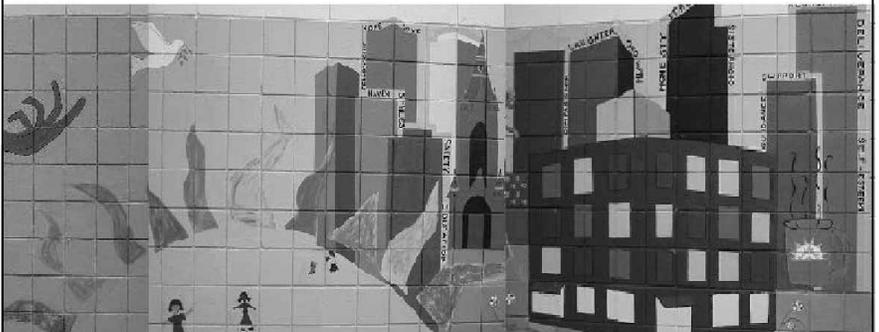
Thanks to Josiah Bell and the ladies of First Light, our courtyard is looking a little brighter these days. Josiah, under the direction of Art Coordinator Marilyn Gross, started painting the colorful mural a few months ago for his Eagle Scouts project and included in his work portrayals of First Light and First Presbyterian. Our many artistic guests, led by 4th-floor resident Vicki Nolan, contributed by painting the children, the dove and the hand of God, in addition to picking out words that reminded them of our center to line the buildings—"growth," "laughter," "sisterhood," and "hope" to name a few.

### Shelter Stories

April 23, 2004

"Everyone is excited because a number of [the women] are working at Talladega Race Track. It is a fun job for them—they will leave at 4:30 a.m., and most are in bed early because they worked there 12 hours today. It is good to see them so enthusiastic about working...One of the residents came up and called me by name and asked about my daughter who is a senior at Pelham High. This young lady was in the 12th grade when my daughter was in the 9th, and now she is at First Light. It broke my heart to see such a bright future leaving high school come to this. She seems to be working hard and getting her life on track—Pray for "Kim!"

- Earlie Simmons, 6th Ave. Baptist Church



March 22, 2004

"...This is my first time as a volunteer and I think I should tell you from the start that I am 11 years old and in the fifth grade. I am having a great time so far, the ladies are soooooo sweet. I also met this little girl named Shawna, but they call her "Cutie." I can hear her giggle all the way in our room. I hope I'll get to come back again later." -Alexandra Rogers

April 10, 2004

"This is my second time volunteering, and once again I enjoyed every minute of it! All of the women are always in good spirits, which is comforting to me. A couple of years ago I wouldn't have pictured myself in a homeless shelter, but I have learned so much by volunteering. This experience has truly been life-changing to me! Hopefully I will be back soon." - Hannah Laney

## Counselor's Corner

Not too long ago, I was asked to describe what I do in my role as counselor of First Light. As I was explaining all the services offered through the counseling program, I was impressed that a shelter is willing to offer so much to the community of homeless women. I think that is what makes First Light so unique among the other shelters in the community; we are trying to provide a holistic approach to meeting the needs of homeless women. With that in mind, I wanted to give a brief overview of the counseling services available at First Light through Project Healthy Minds.

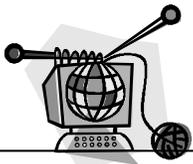
*Individual Counseling:* We offer one-on-one counseling service to all homeless women in the community. The service is also available to those women who have moved on to their own homes or other facilities. The idea is to provide as much support as possible, so that the women can succeed out there in the "real world".

*Breakfast Club:* The Breakfast Club is a weekly group that meets Thursday mornings at 7:15. The purpose of the group is to create a safe environment for the women to discuss what is going on in their lives and to develop life skills. Conflict resolution, substance abuse, grief recovery and stress management are just a few of the topics discussed. The members of the group are encouraged to share their feelings and open up about the problems they are dealing with on a daily basis.

*Movie Therapy:* Movie Therapy is a group that meets every other week. The women watch a movie on Mondays and then have a therapeutic discussion about the movie on Wednesdays at 5:00. The subjects discussed during movie therapy include substance abuse, physical/sexual abuse, grief recovery and self esteem.

*Fun Movie Night:* Just being able to watch a movie for the fun of it can be therapeutic—this happens on alternate Mondays from the Movie Therapy. The ladies choose the movie the week before in the therapy group.

*Medication Management:* For those residents that are on multiple medications, assistance with setting up a weekly medication box is provided. This helps the resident to learn about her medications and the correct way of taking them. It also increases compliance and will hopefully be a skill that she will continue to use after leaving the shelter.



Visit our website!

[www.firstlightshelter.org](http://www.firstlightshelter.org)

## The Light I See

Written by Elizabeth, a First Light Guest

To My Sisters:

Through all we have been through, I think that we are all coming out stronger.

I know my sisters have been in bad relationships, have been beaten and put through what I have. Hold on, push on, get away. That's what I did. We are not asking for abuse, it just seems to be a pattern. Break the pattern. Get help. Either he changes or you walk. I left my abuser 15 years ago. I really didn't think I could, but I did. I took my children over 3000 miles away.

We do not deserve this pain. You need help, someone to talk to, and someone to cry with. Your help is right around the corner, so reach out and take it. You will make it, I promise. Be strong and have faith. It works.

## Will You Help?

**You can make a difference in the lives of Birmingham's homeless women and children.**

You can provide shelter from a life on the streets where there is no place to go when it is raining and cold, except for a business building's overhang, under a bridge, the public library or a cardboard house made from boxes rescued from a dumpster.

You can make a sanctuary available to women and children 24 hours a day with social and counseling services.

You can help provide specialized programs geared to chronically mentally ill women, those who cannot complete traditional day care programs.

You can give homeless women a reason to get up every day, a boost of self-confidence, a source of motivation and job experience through First Light's Coffee Shop program, First Perk.

No one deserves to be homeless. No one plans on being homeless, abused, mentally ill or addicted to drugs and/or alcohol.

Will you help provide shelter to homeless women and children in a place of hope and love with a sense of home and family?

**If you don't, who will?**



I (we) make the following gift, offering a physical example of commitment, care and concern for homeless women and children.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

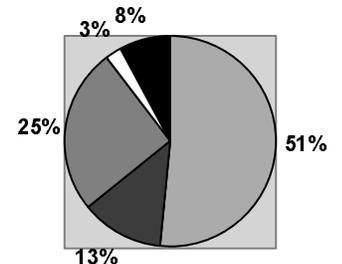
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## First Light Growth

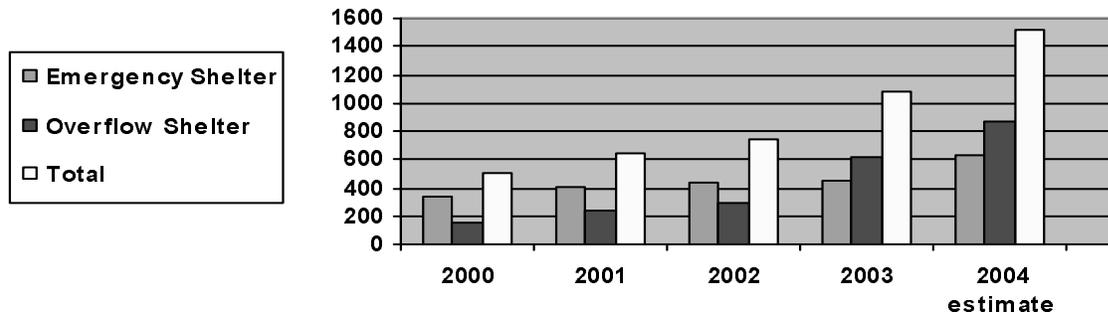
First Light has experienced phenomenal growth since its founding in May 2000. The following charts show the increase in the number of unduplicated homeless women and children served in the emergency shelter and the emergency overflow shelter. The pie chart shows the destinations of guests leaving the emergency shelter.

Year	Emergency Shelter	Overflow Emergency Shelter	Permanent Supportive Housing	Total	Bed Nights
2000	341	158	8	507	9,247
2001	401	238	9	648	12,410
2002	434	292	11	747	13,140
2003	444	622	10	1,066	13,870
Jan-June 2004	318	438	9	765	6,949

- Permanent Housing
- Transitional Shelter
- Treatment
- Hospital
- Other



*Destinations of guests leaving the emergency shelter. Other includes domestic violence shelters, family shelters, etc.*



### Board of Directors & Staff

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 Jeff Morrison  
 Joy O'Neal  
 Blair Sandford  
 Nancy Skinner  
 Rev. Cary Speaker  
 Nancy Turpen  
 Marion Walker  
 Anne Warren  
 Becki Weathers  
 Jessie Williams  
 Jeff Wilson  
 Eukie Woodall  
 Rev. Eugenia Gamble, Ex Officio  
 Rev. Drew Henry, Ex Officio  
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 Sherry J. Webb, LBSW  
 Robin Hunter, Counselor, MA, ALC  
 Valeri Cowart, Program Manager/Volunteer Coordinator  
 Kerri Carruth, Case Manager  
 Angel Hughes, Receptionist  
 Martha Terrell, Coffee Shop Coordinator  
 Sarah Rachac, Jesuit Volunteer  
 Niven Stooksberry, Leslie Lambert, and Emily Simon, Shelter Assistants  
 Natalie O'Neal, Development Intern

### First Light Wish List

#### Hygiene & Personal Items

(New, Unopened Packages Only)

- Deodorant
- Hairbrushes and Combs
- Ibuprofen
- Medication dispensing cups
- Antacids, Pepto-Bismol, Laxatives
- Cold/Sinus/Allergy/Cough Medicine
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Toothbrush & Toothpaste



*\* Cash donations allow us to continue to serve Birmingham's homeless women and children. Volunteers are also needed to bring and serve dinner and stay overnight every day of the year. We appreciate your support!*

#### Food

(New, Unopened Packages Only)

- Fruit
- Cereal
- Boxes of grits and oatmeal (with individual packets)
- Powdered drink mixes (tea, kool-aid, etc)
- Paper or Styrofoam plates, bowls, cups

#### Clothing

- Night Clothes
- Socks and Underwear

#### Household Items

(New or used in good condition)

- Laundry Detergent
- Fabric Softener/Dryer Sheets
- Cleaning Supplies
- Bath Towels
- Extra-long Twin-size Blankets
- Pillows

#### Miscellaneous

- Medication Boxes
- Pens
- Bandage Tape
- Safety Pins