



FIRST LIGHT

*A Center for Homeless Women and Children*

# the LIGHT

Summer 2007

## A Very Special Birthday



Abigail Garrett and Ruth Crosby with the money raised at the party



Angel and Abigail Garrett



Abigail Garrett and Sarah Bragg with First Light guests

Sometimes we think we can't do very much as individuals to help others. But sometimes just one good idea grows into a much bigger accomplishment than you might think! Just ask Abigail Garrett. When Abigail was about to have her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday she decided that instead of receiving gifts for herself she would ask her friends to give donations to First Light. You may remember seeing her photo in the newsletter two years ago? Guess what! Abigail turned 10 this year. That one good idea has turned into something very special. This year she again asked her friends to donate to First Light instead of giving gifts for her birthday. Abigail came by with her mother, Angel Garrett, to bring \$621 to First Light! The guests sang Happy Birthday, thanked her profusely, and gave her lots of hugs.

After visiting First Light and helping serve a meal a child felt such a sense of love and compassion that she started something very special. The guests, the staff, and yours truly were a little misty-eyed when Abigail came with that large pile of dollars and checks to help FL. And think of all her friends who have learned that there might be something more important than birthday gifts once in awhile. Hats off to Angel and Brian Garrett, whose parenting has nurtured such a sensitive response to the community on the part of their daughter. And many, many thanks to Abigail for reminding us that thinking of the needs of others makes the world a better place.

--Deb Everson, Assistant Director of First Light

### Congratulations, Ruth!

Executive Director **Ruth Crosby** was recently recognized with an Alumni Achievement Award from Huntingdon College, her alma mater.

Ruth was chosen for her true dedication to serving the homeless in her community. She received an award plaque and was honored at a special dinner.

Congratulations, Ruth, and thank you so much for all that you do for the women and children at First Light!



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## Food for thought (by Deb)



### *Good Stewardship*

I read something in a newsletter recently: “stewardship...is the ongoing relationship with a donor based on mutual respect for both the source and the impact of the gift...”

The mission and values of First Light remain clear and focused, and this is an attempt to report back to you that your contributions, whether big or seemingly small, DO have an impact.

On a daily basis, our staff and the numerous volunteers who come in and out the doors are **here** making a difference. Our guests are given respect and dedicated service. There is laughter, there are tears, and there is love...tough love, at times.

As the newest person on staff here at First Light, I am humbled by what I observe. I watch the social workers interacting with the women as they start or end their appointments. I pop my head in as “Miss Marilyn” is doing art therapy classes or as guests are preparing for their harp circle sessions. Each afternoon the women line up to sign up for chores and wait for dinner to be served. They obviously value this time and this place because they are smiling, for the most part, and attentive to what the shelter assistant or “Miss Ruth” has to say to them today.

The guests at FL are receiving case management from a truly dedicated staff of social workers. We are attempting to help women examine the root causes for their current situation and working with them to address how they can bring about change, one day, one week, one month at a time. Because we are an emergency shelter, there is a lot of focus on immediate and/or short term goals. But the focus is clear – let’s look at whatever obstacles are keeping them from reaching independent living. We want our guests to move on to either transitional living or permanent housing. In the coming months you will be hearing about our partnership with Pathways in a Shelter+Care program...providing intensive case management to individuals who are given vouchers to live in permanent supportive housing. The idea is to provide ongoing case management which helps the participants to keep their housing.

I cannot pretend to be an expert on all the good First Light has done over the years. But I am here to spread the news to as many people as possible, and, hopefully, gain more and more support for our and your effort to provide the absolute best possible service to our guests. It is important to me to let you know that your sacrifices of time, goods or cash **are** making a difference in lives every day, every week, every month...one art therapy class, one social work session, one harp circle, one meal, one shower, one safe night’s sleep at a time.

We **are** good stewards with the many gifts we receive from all our donors, volunteers, funders, and friends. I am humbled but proud to be here.

## Volunteers of the Month (February ~ April, 2007)

### FEBRUARY

**Pauline Fiorella**  
Cathedral of Saint Paul

### MARCH

**The Ness Family**  
Saint Frances Xavier Catholic Church

### APRIL

**Rosemary Pennington**



### “Homeless” Around the World



**ROUGH SLEEPER** Britain  
A person who sleeps “in the rough”

**SIN TECHO** Spain  
A person “without a roof above”

**SANS DOMICILE FIXE** France  
A person without a permanent home

**OBDACHLOS** Germany  
A person without shelter

**SENZATETTO** Italy  
A person “without a roof above”

**BREZDOMEK** Russia  
A person without a house

## Special Thanks

To these steadfast supporters of First Light

**Independent Presbyterian Church Foundation**

**City of Birmingham**

**Saint Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church**

**Alabama Power Energizers**

**Jefferson County Commission**

**John and Delia Robert Charitable Trust**

## Community Generosity

First Light would like to thank the **Alabama Civil Justice Foundation** and its trial lawyer members, who have granted \$3,000 to FL for 2007. We greatly appreciate their generous contribution and dedication to First Light.

Thanks also to **Father Joe Culotta** and the congregation of **St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church**. Recently Father Joe came by for a tour of First Light and handed us a check for \$3,000 donated by church members. This money was a portion of the proceeds from the church's gala, which was coordinated by Pam Allen. First Light is so grateful to the St. Mark's community for their generosity in this gift, as well as the hours of service they contribute each year by preparing and serving meals and volunteering in the emergency shelter.

First Light also received a grant of approximately \$250,000 from the **United States Department of Housing and Urban Development** (HUD). About \$84,000 of the grant money will fund the current permanent supportive housing program, which houses nine women with serious mental illnesses. The rest of the money will establish a new permanent supportive housing program. First Light will lease eight apartment units in Bessemer to house women who are chronically homeless. First Light will also provide the intense case management needed to keep these women from returning to homelessness.

**Did you know that there are several EASY ways to help the women and children at First Light?**

**Did you know:**

- That your employer may be willing to contribute money to First Light just because you volunteer here?
- That your employer may be willing to match up to 100% of any contribution you make to First Light?
- That if your bank offers online bill-pay, you can have donations automatically sent to First Light on a regular basis? No more writing checks, buying stamps and licking envelopes!
- That you can make a secure, one-time contribution electronically at [www.firstlightshelter.org](http://www.firstlightshelter.org)?
- That in lieu of birthday gifts or sympathy flowers, you can request that friends and family make a financial contribution or an in-kind donation of supplies to First Light? *Read this newsletter's cover story for inspiration!*

**Making a difference in your community has never been easier!**

## YOU can make a difference

**Your donation to First Light will go directly toward serving the most needy members of our community—the homeless women and children of Birmingham.**

**Your gift will directly impact the lives of First Light guests by:**

- Making emergency shelter services available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that no woman or child has to sleep on the street or stay in an unhealthy situation
- Supplying nine units of permanent housing for women with serious mental illnesses
- Supporting one-on-one counseling for each guest and specialized counseling programs for guests with chronic mental illness who cannot participate in traditional day programs
- Funding Project Healthy Minds, which includes Life Skills classes, medication and transportation assistance, art therapy, movie therapy and group therapy
- **Providing a place of hope and love and a sense of family to the women and children who call First Light home**



**Will you make a difference in the lives of Birmingham's homeless women and children by donating to First Light?**

I (we) give the following gift as a physical example of commitment, care and concern for the homeless women and children in our community.

- \$5,000
- \$1,000
- \$500
- \$250
- \$100
- \$50
- \$25
- Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**First Light accepts donations by check and credit card.**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date (mm/yy): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ **First Light accepts Visa and MasterCard**

This contribution is made: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: Address: \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of: City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

This is an anonymous gift. Your name will not be included in our annual report.

**First Light, Inc.**  
**2230 Fourth Avenue North**  
**Birmingham, AL 35203**

**205.323.4277**

**www.firstlightshelter.org**

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 Marilyn A. Gross, Art Therapy Coordinator

**WISH LIST**



**Food**

(new, unopened packages only, please):

- Fruit
- Cereal and Cereal Bars
- Pop-tarts
- Instant grits and oatmeal (individual packets)
- Powdered drink mixes
- Paper or Styrofoam bowls and cups
- Plastic forks, spoons and knives
- Quart and gallon-size Ziploc bags
- Snacks for life skills programs

**Hygiene and Personal Items**

(new, unopened packages only, please):

- Cold, sinus, allergy and cough medications
- Children's over-the-counter medications
- Over-the-counter stomach medications
- Pain relief medications
- Pill boxes
- Feminine hygiene products
- Kleenex
- Lip balm
- Deodorant

