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FIRST LIGHT



Holiday Lights 2023

It can be hard to find a **one-of-a-kind** holiday gifts. You can support First Light’s mission through the Holiday Lights greeting card program. We will send holiday greetings to your friends, loved ones, and colleagues and celebrate your kindness with holiday lights all around the top of our building.



Please respond to the Holiday Lights mailing that will be sent to you in early November by making a gift and completing the form to let us know whom you wish to honor or remember during this holiday season. Or you can do that online by clicking the *Holiday Lights* image at www.firstlightshelter.org.



Make First Light shine with a unique and meaningful holiday gift from you to vulnerable homeless women and children.



Leave a legacy that reflects your values and your commitment to our community. Ask your financial advisor how to make a gift through a trust, will, life insurance policy, or retirement plan that best suits your philanthropic goals. And please let us know if you have included First Light in your estate plans.

THE LIGHT

Fall 2023 Edition



FIRST LIGHT

A Center for Homeless Women and Children

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

Message from the Director

It is hard to believe that we are almost through another year. As we enter into the fall months and the holiday season, I am reminded that the work that First Light does is certainly not seasonal. For many we serve at the shelter, the change in season is just another stark reminder of the changes they are striving for in their lives.

As we prepare for the weather to change, we are making sure we are ready for the many women and children who will come through our doors in times of struggle and uncertainty. We are here to give them a chance for a better future. We provide shelter, offer hope, and instill dignity to those for whom homelessness has taken a treacherous toll. We are redirecting our focus from simply providing clients with a roof over their heads to addressing individual and family wellness as a whole. We have increased the number of life skills classes and group and individual counseling sessions we offer. Our calendar of events and services is as full as it has ever been. We sit with and listen more to people. We learn about their lives, their struggles, their resiliency, and their goals. We work together to connect them to the housing, sources of income, and medical or mental health support they need to reach those goals. We laugh, we sing and we dance with those who are hurting. The work we do is not seasonal but happens year-round.

I am confident that we will continue to do amazing things for this community. Together, we will continue the fight against homelessness. Thank you for your goodwill and generous support, and thank you for standing with First Light -I am grateful.

-Sherry Bray, Executive Director

Your Support Changes Lives



Ms. Ester wanted a place to plant and grow tomatoes. She came into shelter with her daughter and granddaughter, and was in a wheelchair. They found themselves faced with obstacles they had never experienced before. They were homeless. Ms. Ester was soon adopted as the unofficial grandmother of several other guests in the emergency shelter, and they let everyone know that no one better mess not with Ms. Ester! Ms. Ester was an amputee and because of her medical conditions and age, the staff knew that finding housing for her might be difficult. Ms. Ester was referred to First Light’s Rapid Rehousing program, and with the hard work of her social worker who advocated with a local landlord, Ms. Ester found housing that she and her family could afford. Because of your support, First Light was able to give this family a safe environment in housing that could accommodate Ms. Ester’s mobility challenges. Today, Ms. Ester is excited to settle into her own place and she will have support from a social worker for many months to come. She credits First Light for giving her family a chance to start over. And the one thing she wanted, other than housing, was a tomato plant—which she happily takes care of every day.



When Rachel and her three children—ages one and a half, four and eight—came into First Light’s emergency shelter, they were tired and needed a place to rest and to be safe. Rachel had left an abusive situation where she had been living with her children because she decided her children’s safety had to be her main concern. She found safety here at First Light. With the help of community programs and her social worker, Rachel was referred to a program through which she found housing for herself and her children—something she had not had in four years. Rachel has a medical condition which restricts her from working full time, but her determination to get housing and to provide a safe place for her children empowered her to do what it took to find housing that she could afford. Rachel is relieved to have a safe, comfortable place for her children. And she still has the support of a social worker and staff who will give her and her children the wraparound support they need. Your gifts and volunteer time create stronger individuals and stronger families, so their success can echo through generations.



Volunteer Spotlight



First Light is extremely grateful for the partnership with The Home Depot RDC 5086 of McCalla and for all of the services and projects they have completed at First Light! Team Depot is a group of Home Depot associates

who volunteer within the community they work. For them it is a chance to give back and make a difference.

The Home Depot provided lunch to our guests and added special upgrades to the children's play area that included chalk board walls, fun and colorful floor mats, and a custom hand built and painted bookshelf

made just for the space! Over the course of five days, The Home Depot volunteers moved furniture, cleaned and prepped rooms, and painted eight of our 4th Floor In-House residents' rooms. This was a tremendous task that has given new life to spaces that our residents call home. We are so thankful for the time and hard work given from each volunteer. A special thank you to Courtney Brown and Kevin Reagor for spearheading and supervising these projects and establishing our partnership.



"The Home Depot McCalla Rapid Deployment Center embodies one word -LOVE, and that stands for Living Our Values Everyday. Four of our Seven core values are Giving back, building

strong relationships, doing the right thing, and taking care of our people. With so much need from our community, navigating to find the organization that closely align with our core values was very important. We wanted to partner with an organization who provided the psychological needs according to Maslow: food, water, clothing, sleep, and shelter.

"First Light Shelter has been doing this since 1983. We are very thankful for this partnership with First Light Shelter. Giving back is very important to our organization. It provides an opportunity to improve someone's quality of life, connect with other members of the community, and it is platform to share positive experiences and to be a resource for our brothers and sisters in need."- Courtney Brown of The Home Depot



First Light is grateful for the service provided by FirstBank, a local bank that has consistently provided the guests of First Light lunches on a monthly basis and providing over 90 hours of volunteer service in the past two years. Prior to the beginning of this school year, FirstBank sponsored the children of First Light and provided them with all back-to-school essentials tailored to their favorite colors and favorite characters.

"It's really hard for me to put into words what volunteering for First Light means to me. Simply put, it is my own calling, I feel led to help and do what I can for these ladies and children. The children especially tug on my heart. I love the whole foundation of First Light, the principles it was built on, the energy put into it, the way it brings out the best in people who give their money and time to be a part of this special place. I know there is no other shelter in place like First Light, and I pray the Lord will continue to bless the center, the guests, and everyone around it that helps make sure things run smoothly."- Allison George of FirstBank



Presented by SCA HEALTH

BENEFITING THE HOMELESS WOMEN AND FAMILIES OF FIRST LIGHT
October 5, 2023 at 6:30 pm
The Lyric Theatre & by Live Stream
1800 3rd Avenue North, Birmingham, Alabama

JOIN US!

<https://firstlightstars.swell.gives>



STARRING

JAVACIA BOWSER AND GRACEN MORRISON • MISHELLE CORONADO AND JESSICA PONTE • HAYLEY BARBER DESHAZO AND ASHA GANGOLLI • ANDREA HENDRICKS AND BRANDON BARRANCO • MELISSA HUGHEY AND DAVID ODENWELDER • ASHLEY JONES AND GLENDINNING PAUL • NATE KARR AND ASHLEY HAWKINS • JONATHAN MCKINNEY AND MIKAYLAH DUGANS • JESSICA POOR AND ASHLEY TAYLOR • TONIA TROTTER PRICE AND JENNA GRAHAM • RENEE PRICE AND BAILEY BECKNER • DOROTHEA STAURSKEY AND CATIE BARRON • SHANNON STEWART AND ALYCE ARMSTRONG

THANK YOU TO OUR LEADING SPONSORS



Our Presenting Sponsor



Service is at the heart of the SCA Health culture. With more than 320 surgical facilities, over 11,300 teammates, and 9,200 physicians, SCA Health provides high quality medical care to 1.43 million patients each year. Whether serving patients or supporting the community, their mission and values are grounded in giving back throughout the enterprise, throughout the country, and throughout the year.

The generous spirit of SCA Health is evident in ways big and small. As a foundational corporate partner of the nonprofit organization, One World Surgery, they help transform lives in medical missions to Honduras and the Dominican Republic. They host hundreds of volunteer events each year, and incorporate community service into every SCA Health meeting. They also support their own teammates in times of hardship, tragedy, or natural disaster. When someone's home was lost in a fire, they helped refurbish it—and they raised more than \$270,000 to support colleagues facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are proud that SCA Health continues as the presenting sponsor of Dancing with the Stars of the Magic City and an important partner in our mission.