



FIRST LIGHT

A CENTER FOR HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN

THE LIGHT

Summer 2009 Edition

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

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The 11th Annual First Light Gala, presented by Burr & Forman and sponsored by Protective Life Corporation, was held on May 9th at the Doubletree Hotel in the UAB area. The 2009 Gala was more than we hoped for, given we were trying a new venue, a new auctioneer and a new agenda. We have heard so many positive comments. If you attended we hope you had a great evening. Everyone seemed to enjoy the more intimate atmosphere! And the Live auction was fun and entertaining! Please see our web site and our Facebook page to view many Gala photos.

Some highlights:

Scott Ford, Gala Chair, welcomed everyone and the evening was off to a festive start. Deb Everson set the stage with reminders to the audience about why we were there: to support First Light's mission. She pointed out that no matter what your contribution-whether a fundraiser earlier in the year raising \$10,000; the purchase of art in the Auction; the money spent on a ticket to the Gala, or even proceeds from a lemonade stand (One dollar and nineteen pennies)...it all makes a difference for the homeless women and children we serve.

David Elliott received the Honoree of the year award. A past Board Chair, David has fostered support of First Light's mission in the corporate community as well as from his own firm, Burr & Forman. We asked our longtime supporter, Bill Matthews, to



Ruth Crosby and David Elliott, Honoree of the Year

introduce David. It was so personally meaningful for both of them since Bill is David's father-in-law. And David's heartfelt comments were touching for all to hear. We appreciate you so much, David.

The Volunteers of the Year are the students who have represented Birmingham Southern Service Learning Center by appearing at FL every Wednesday throughout the school year to visit with our guests and serve dinner. The presence of young

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Volunteer of the Month



April 2009

Jill Marceau

Helped in numerous ways with preparation for Gala.



May 2009

Scott Ford

Chaired Gala and secured many donations of cash and art!



June 2009

Cliff Nail & Ashley Reynolds

Have brought and served breakfast every other Wednesday morning.

11th Annual First Light Gala



*Generosity is giving more than you can,
and pride is taking less than you need.*

Kahlil Gibran



*I have learned that when I extend my hand or my
arm to another in a gesture of giving, whether it be
solace, forgiveness, a helping hand or a charitable
giving....it creates an open space between myself
and that person which is filled with joy.*

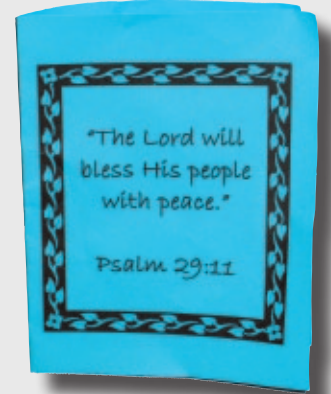
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PHOTO CREDITS: ALL GALA PHOTOS BY WYNTER C.S. BYRD AND LISA NAIL

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
by Deb

This is our Summer edition of the newsletter. It is hot, humid...not easy to walk the streets of Birmingham to the Library, to the doctor, to the pharmacy or to other service organizations who can help a woman get back on her feet. We continue our good work with women facing many obstacles which have kept them homeless. We could not do this work without your support, so we feel it is absolutely imperative to provide information and documentation of events and developments –to assure you that this agency and our guests are worthy of your support. To provide evidence of successes. To tell the story of those who are too busy trying to survive day to day to be able to tell their own story.



You will see herein our documentation of donors for the past year. It is with great humility and appreciation that we thank all our volunteers and our donors and contributors for believing in our mission and backing that belief with numerous gestures of kindness, financial support or prayer. It all matters to us and to those we serve. The importance of giving to others is something many far more poetic than I have mused and written about. Please know that your interactions with First Light, whatever they might be, are significant and meaningful.

On behalf of all the women and children we have served in the past year, and those who will continue in the coming months to enter our door, sleep on our floor or on second floor in the emergency shelter beds.....thank you for supporting First Light.

*There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward.
And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism.
And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue;
They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space.
Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.*
Kahlil Gibran

Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others.

Barbara Bush

Budget-Relieving Wish List

- 8.5X11 white copy paper
- Blue and black ink pens
- White-out
- Breakfast foods:**
 - Individual pkts of instant oatmeal
 - Individual pkts of instant grits
 - Generic, bulk cereals
 - Fresh or canned fruit
 - Fruit juice

- Milk - 2%
- Coffee creamer
- Sugar
- Breakfast or granola bars
- Decaf coffee
- Disposable goods:**
 - Plates
 - Bowls
 - Cups

- Forks, spoons, knives
- Napkins
- Gift cards to Block Buster or Movie Gallery for movie therapy
- Snack items for group therapies
- Bleach
- Over the Counter meds
- Wash cloths
- Kitchen towels

Stubb's BBQ

We got a call one day that the famous Stubb's Barbecue restaurant and sauce maker out of Austin, Texas, was doing a "Feed the World Tour" and wanted to include First Light in their journey. They traveled from Texas through southeastern states up to Washington, D.C., then headed back by way of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, etc. Along the way they were stopping in several cities to feed the hungry. The founder, C.B. Stubblefield, always said he had come into the world hungry and he wanted to feed the world when he became successful. Stubb's President, Kurt Koegler, and three other Stubb's employees, brought their mobile museum to show the story of their founder and his special sauces. Kurt and the crew appeared Monday, June 8th, with all the fixings to serve a delicious barbecue lunch to our ladies. Their PR folks did the homework, we Twittered and mentioned



it on Facebook...and it was a great day. All three local tv networks came by to do an interview and film the food being served. See more about this on our Facebook page and/or the website. The really neat thing: Rocky Stubblefield III prepared the food in our kitchen. His sweet smile and easy manner tells me he learned a lot from his grandfather. (To learn more about Stubbs see www.stubbsbbq.com)



Another Frest Start

One of the great pleasures we have is watching a woman's journey gain momentum toward the day she will leave FL and move into her own apartment. For some it has been years since they have actually lived in their own place. Some women have never had their own apartment or home. Today a lady came in with an unfamiliar air about her. She asked for Quita, then Sherry. I noticed she was nervously shifting back and forth from one foot to the other. When Sherry approached she blurted it out: "I got the keys to my own apartment today!" And I saw a smile on this woman I had never seen before. She said, "I am so excited."



And so it begins...time spent at First Light has lead to another fresh start. This is one of the few remaining Year 2 Shelter + Care participants who had been approved for the program and was waiting for the apartment she liked to be okayed. Once finding an apartment there must be an inspection and approval by the County Housing Authority. Once it passes inspection, the lease can be signed and it's time

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to move in. This process does not happen in just a few weeks. The social worker is supporting the woman throughout each stage, doing case management, assisting with paperwork and providing transportation when needed. It is a partnership - both the social worker and the lady are planning and recognizing areas where she needs assistance and setting reasonable goals to achieve along the way and after moving.

All participants meet at First Light once a month to attend life skills training, classes on budgeting, nutrition, and the new stresses of living in their own apartments. As you can imagine, there are new challenges to face with the new lifestyle and we never want a woman to feel alone in this. They follow the case plan they designed together. If AA meetings or support groups are a part of the plan, we are monitoring the lady's compliance to attendance at meetings and the overall case plan, in general. It is a big step for many of our emergency shelter guests who go into this program. And it's a step that is cause for rejoicing. The jingling of those apartment keys is a high point in her journey toward independent living.

Movie Matinee

Ladonna Robinson brought a group of young women from Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, to offer an afternoon matinee to our ladies one Saturday. Jack and Jill of America is an African-American organization of mothers who nurture future leaders by strengthening children ages 2-19 through chapter programming, community service, legislative advocacy and philanthropic giving. They showed Hotel for Dogs. Snacks were served and there was a lot of giggling. It's so nice to hear laughter coming from the program room!

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adults at First Light means so much to the ladies. The students play games, entertain, or simply sit and chat with our guests. Their presence assures those we serve that they have not been forgotten and provides a positive image of the future for our community. Birmingham Southern student coordinators Katelyn Hancock and Molly Waters graciously accepted the award from Shannon Horsley, Volunteer Manager and FL resident, Joy McCluskey.

Christie King, of C. King Benefit Auctions, LLC, conducted the live auction with professionalism and genuine enthusiasm for contributing to our mission and budget. She and her assistants had a real flair for making the process entertaining. We appreciate Christie and her assistant, Cathy Thomas, for making the auction portion of the evening successful and enjoyable for everyone.

Planning for a Gala begins long before the first announcements go out. The Gala committee this year spent numerous hours of dreaming, scheming and working to create an event that was enjoyed so much. We cannot thank you enough for all you did. Scott Ford was the Gala Chair and he is the first to express appreciation to all those committee members who gave so much of their personal time

to organize and conduct our largest fund raiser. First Light raised approximately \$115,000 this year.

To everyone who played a role in making the Gala such a success...we thank you so much. Let's do it again next year: May 1, 2010.



Birmingham Southern College students awarded Volunteers of the Year



A Catered Luncheon with Celebs

One of the Live Auction items at our Gala in May was a catered lunch with two NBC 13 HD morning and mid-day news anchors, Andrea Lindenberg and Rod Carter, who graciously agreed to be “auctioned” to the highest bidder. The staff of Richard Tubb Interiors were the winners of this really fun experience, thanks to Richard Tubb. Echelon Catering chef, Gray Byrum, provided a gourmet meal for twelve as his part of the auction donation. They had a really fun time (see posts on the First Light Facebook page for photos) and could be heard laughing up and down third floor hall. The food was beautiful AND delicious. By the time lunch was over they were acting like old pals and posing for pictures to take home.

Andrea, Rod, Richard and all the others took a tour of First Light before they started and were really touched with the Emergency Shelter. After lunch we finished with a visit to the 4th floor guests. Both Andrea and Rod went inside the living room where the residents were sharing leisure time...all the ladies shouted “NBC 13!!!!” which, of course won their hearts over. Both Aunnie and Rod posted comments on our Facebook page about how much they enjoyed their time here.

Thanks to Andrea, Rod and Gray for creating a very special experience at First Light for Richard Tubb and his staff. We are glad to have made new friends with all of you.

Emily Thomas And Her Violin

Emily Thomas is a Gadsden, Alabama native. She is 16 and has been playing the violin for over 7 years. She started playing with the June Bugg Moore Prelude Orchestra in 2002 and in 2006 joined the Etowah Youth Orchestra.

Her accomplishments include New York’s Carnegie Hall in 2007, Alabama’s All-State Orchestra 2007 and 2008, and Etowah Youth Orchestra’s Honor Strings. She has also played on stage with Mark Woods, the Concert Master for the Trans-Siberian Orchestra.

Emily’s mother is Cathy Thomas, assistant to Christie King, our Gala Auctioneer. One afternoon when Cathy was meeting with us about the Gala, Emily came along and was in the Program Room practicing for her lesson that evening. Needless to say, beautiful violin music wafting from that area is not the norm. We were so impressed we asked if she might consider playing for the ladies some time. That time was July 3rd. So, the ladies were treated to a mini concert to launch their special 4th of July weekend. She is currently taking violin lessons here in Birmingham from Kris and David Handler of the Gadsden and Alabama Symphony Orchestras. Her goal is to attend Wheaton College Conservatory of Music in Wheaton, IL. Good Luck and Thanks so much, Emily, for sharing your gift with First Light residents!

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.firstlightshelter.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.

How can you help a woman in the Shelter + Care program?

Please call Deb Everson at 323-4277 before bringing large items.
Timing is everything— We don't have a lot of space at First Light.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sheets | Baking sheet | Spatula |
| Blanket | 4-piece place setting of dishes | Drinking glasses |
| Pillows | 4-piece place setting of silverware | Bath towels, wash cloths |
| Small TV | Can opener | Cleaning supplies and cleaning cloths |
| Cooking pot | Ice trays | Powder laundry detergent |



GOODBYE & HELLO

We said farewell to staff Social Worker Sarah Greer in May. Sarah has been a beloved member of our FL staff family for two years and had a significant impact on the many guests to whom she provided supportive care. It is all for good, of course. Sarah and her husband, Ben, are expecting a baby. Since Ben is a teacher with Hewitt-Trussville High School, they decided to spend the summer together as they prepare the way for the baby. Sarah will spend quality time with the baby in the early years before starting back to work again later. We miss her terribly but have only warm wishes as this blessing comes to her and Ben.

Given budget constraints due to lower contribution levels, we actually reduced staff with layoffs starting in September 2008. Yet the numbers we served last summer were higher than ever.

We are proud of our social work staff, led by Sherry Webb. They are the ones dealing face to face with the realities of homelessness which our guests endure.

Current social work staffing is as follows:

Melody Jenkins - a Montevallo graduate with a BSW, Melody is a staff Social Worker for Emergency Shelter, who started with us early last Summer; Patrice Reese, BSW, who interned with us and just graduated from Montevallo, takes over as the second (Year II) permanent supportive housing Social Worker with the Shelter Plus Care program; Roxanna Harris has her MSW from the University of Alabama and has become our Overflow and staff Social Worker, allowing Kelsey Wenger, with a BSW from UAB, to move to the position as the other staff Social Worker for Emergency Shelter.



Roxanna W. Harris



Melody Jenkins



Patrice J. Reese



Kelsey Wenger

THE FIRST LIGHT BEADED CROSS PROJECT

This amazing project began in spring of 2006 in Art Therapy Class. With broken jewelry and donated beads, our ladies began creating small, wire-wrapped, colorful crosses. Requests for crosses began coming in and they were taken to churches, mission fairs, women's clubs, hair salons, business meetings, colleges and universities, retirement homes and various art galleries. As the word spread, specialty crosses were requested and created in colors to represent: Breast Cancer and Ovarian Cancer Awareness; the Red Hat Society; liturgical seasons of the church year; patriotic themes; college and university colors; wedding celebrations; and international flags, to name just a few.

A new development then occurred. As friends and First Light supporters traveled abroad, crosses were packed in suitcases and taken on journeys across the globe. A world map in the art room is marked with pins designating where First Light crosses can be found: South America, the Ukraine, England, Africa, Australia. As an act of devotion, one cross was left on the altar in the Chapel of Our Lady in Notre Dame in Paris, along with a prayer for all homeless, wounded and disenfranchised people of our world.

When the First Light Art Shop opened in November, 2007, crosses and other creative projects by our ladies were attractively displayed and sold. In 2½ years, over **\$72,000** has been collected, which also includes all items sold in the Art Shop since it opened. All proceeds have gone to support First Light.

Requests for crosses are still being made. However, the Beaded Cross Project has come to a close. At the end of 2008, our talented friend and First Light resident, Sandy Vick, moved to be near her North Carolina family. Sandy, along with occasional help from several other residents, ended up as our primary cross creator.

Engaging in the creative process can be one step on the pathway toward healing. This is the true purpose of the art program. When our women take pride in their efforts, they feel better about themselves. The creation process relieves stress, promotes feelings of achievement, and boosts self-esteem and self-confidence.

So it is now time to celebrate and give thanks for this incredible grass roots endeavor. This project has been a blessing for all concerned: a blessing for our ladies, a blessing for First Light, a blessing for our community, and hopefully, a blessing for our world. Personally, I want to extend a loving "thank you" to all who helped with this project. Isn't it amazing what God can do with wire, ribbon, donated beads, and willing hands and hearts?

Marilyn Gross

Art Therapy Coordinator, First Light Center for Homeless Women and Children



I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.

Maya Angelou

"Thank you" to Art Program Volunteers



***Thank you to the following people who helped with the
Art Therapy Program this past year:***

Thank you to the following people who helped with the Art Therapy Program this past year:

Stephanie Browdy
Elizabeth Callan
Ginny Fowler
Jenny Nickoli
Spring Olson
Herb Patterson

Dale Quinn
Hanna Schock and family
Carol Thomas
Ruth E. Troyanek
SHE-SHE Vaughn
Karen Wright

Many of the volunteers assisted me with various art projects, several led activities and substituted for me, others donated art supplies and brought snacks, and all volunteers displayed a warm, supportive and helpful spirit when interacting with our First Light guests.

With gratitude,
Marilyn Gross, Art Therapy Coordinator

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

Winston Churchill

FY09 CONTRIBUTORS

We have made every effort to make certain that all donors have been listed correctly here. Please feel free to contact us at 323-4277 if there is an omission or mistake that we need to be made aware of. We apologize for any omissions or errors.

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