

ANNUAL REPORT

**FISCAL YEAR
2022-2023**

VISION

Our mission is to end homelessness in the greater Birmingham area.

MISSION

Our mission is to offer those experiencing homelessness stable emergency shelter, access to housing programs, and the resources for them to achieve their full potential.

VALUES

In our mission to provide these services to those experiencing homelessness we:

Offer hope

Provide opportunity

Instill dignity

Ensure safety

Demonstrate hospitality

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

For more than 40 years, First Light has been providing shelter to homeless women and children in the Birmingham area. Since 1983, we have served more than 20,000 women and children. The vision expressed then of no one being homeless still rings true today.

The past four decades, First Light has been working with a compassionate community to help rebuild lives and bring people to a place they can call home, temporarily. As we think on the past 40 years and the work that was started in a cold church basement, the need continues to be greater now than ever before. **While the mission and vision expressed by the founding community volunteers has not changed, our services continue to evolve.** With this has been increased access to housing, improved mental and physical health, and the hope of a brighter and better future for families who are unhoused. Above all, we remain committed to the mission of helping those who are experiencing homelessness connect to resources to help them rebuild their lives.

This has been a year of expansion of services and challenges as we work to address the growing number of people who are experiencing homelessness and are seeking our services. First Light continues to deliver vital services to the most vulnerable in our community. Our incredible dedicated staff continues to be committed to providing care and services to participants in our permanent supportive housing programs and in the emergency shelter. Our volunteers continue to be vital in the work being done at the shelter and the ongoing dedication of providing meals, making donations and providing their services, does not go unnoticed.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Executive Team, we want to thank you for your support. We depend heavily on contributions from individuals, businesses, churches, foundations, and many others to have the resources we need to do the work. **We are deeply grateful for your generosity and lasting support.**

Board of Directors

Blair W. Sandford, President
Davis Goodson, Vice President
Damon Reed, Treasurer
Emily Vande Lune, Secretary
Andrew Alexander
Jay Agnew
Melinda Burnett
Allison Chang-Roberts
Maria Coley
Jeffrey A. Cowart
Arthur Edge, III
Rev. Terry Hamilton-Poore
Gracie Johnsey
Pamela Koehler
Virginia Miller
Kelsey Mitchell
Heather Nelms
Vinay Patel
Vishwa Patel
Millicent W. Ronnlund
Gwin Sanders

Young Partners

Kelsey L. Mitchell, President
Mary Katherine White, Vice President
Zachary P. Martin, Secretary
Ghada Abouhaidar
Ashley Adams
Ashton Adams
Alexis Brinkmeyer
McKenzie Driskell
Sharli Gaston
Abigail Kraus
Anna Kraus
Liz Moore
Lucas Lopez
John Naramore
Emily Pendley
Robert E Pendley
Rosemary Turner
Megan Woodruff

News from the Board of Directors

It has been a very active year for our board members supporting the mission and the staff of First Light. We on-boarded two new board members in June and then kicked off our fiscal year with a half-day board retreat in August. In this retreat, we focused on the mission of ending homelessness in the greater Birmingham area and evaluated our strategy to carry out that mission. As part of the strategy, we hired JF Smith Group to conduct a feasibility study to assess the feasibility of projects to address the fact that First Light has outgrown its current space and needs renovations. The projects identified opportunities that could enhance the organization now and sustain its impact well into the future. This study also provided us with feedback in general about the operations, governance, and perceptions of First Light. We want to thank those of you who participated in this study. Your feedback and guidance through the interviews were extremely valuable to the Board.

The Board of Directors and the Junior Board (the First Light Young Partners) put a lot of time and energy into our two main fund-raising events every year. Our Gala and our Dancing with The Stars of the Magic City fund raising events were successful and continue to be key parts of serving the mission of First Light not only to acquire needed funding but also to communicate and share the mission with others in our community. The Board added a Facilities committee this year to strengthen our focus and support that we can offer Sherry and the staff with challenges and opportunities related to the building. The Junior Board continues to be a strong team with a tremendous amount of talent. Together we are identifying opportunities to improve the partnership between the two boards, increase the visibility of the Young Partners in the community and leverage their skills and experience effectively.

I want to thank our Board and Junior Board for their time, effort and commitment to the Mission of First Light. It takes a village and together with our outstanding Executive Director and staff, committed volunteers and strong donors and sponsors we are carrying out the mission of First Light every day!

Blair Sandford
Board of Directors President

DONOR AND VOLUNTEER IMPACT

3,662
volunteers
gave
6,944
hours
of service and
resources



491
donors
donated goods
totaling
\$426,220

First Light is thrilled to announce another year of unwavering support from our incredible donors and volunteers. The extraordinary generosity of our donors empower us to meet the needs of the women and children in our city. With supporters like you, we can achieve so much more together.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

CHERI PRATER

Cheri Prater has been a longtime volunteer at First Light. Her and her family along with dear friends have been serving the guests of First Light Christmas morning breakfast for 32 years! "I have been a volunteer with First Light since 1986 and have served in many areas and met such special souls. I have been able to share the story of First Light to so many, which brings so much joy to me when they begin to serve. Our time at First Light is Christmas with our "Love Friends." - Cheri Prater



HALEY AND VENESIA WILLIE



Haley and Venesia Willie provide a very special activity for our guests by hosting a birthday party each month at the shelter. They provide birthday bags filled with goodies, homemade cupcakes, and fun entertainment. For some guests, this is the only birthday recognition they receive.

"We enjoy hosting a monthly birthday party for the guests of First Light because it gives us an opportunity to spread a little love and joy. This year has been life changing in more ways than one, and the women we have encountered have truly made a positive impact on us. You can sense the anticipation as we are decorating the room and preparing to enjoy baked goodies while playing a few rounds of bingo. There is a lot of laughter, joy, and gratitude that fills the room when we are together. Everyone has a special place in our hearts and each time we walk away thinking of ways to make the next month even more special. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to encourage, uplift, and love on the amazing women and children of First Light. We look forward to continuing our volunteer efforts for many years to come." - Venesia Willie

REPORT BY THE NUMBERS

93

children served



130

moved
into housing



55

families served



187

group
sessions



10,547

bed
nights

807

served



Betty's Story



From the time she entered the doors of First Light, we knew that the goal was to get Betty housed. Her plan was the epidemic of what we aim to do everyday. Betty had worked her entire life, raised her children and felt that she had done a good job. Unexpectedly, her job ended. Not wanting to be a burden on her children, she turned to First Light after many nights of sleeping in her car. From her initial intake and stay in the emergency shelter, all available resources were explored for her. She worked with her case manager and began receiving social security benefits. Getting her housed was paramount. She was 62 with health problems and the number of days in shelter began to grow much faster than she anticipated.

A few months ago, Betty was housed in First Light's Permanent Supportive Housing Program where she will receive ongoing case management and support. She no longer sleeps in her car, but was recently gifted a car by a donor so she can now drive home and to her new job.

PROGRAM AND SERVICES

First Light provides many resources to our guests in and out of shelter. We do this by equipping the ladies with resources used as tools to assist in meeting their goals.

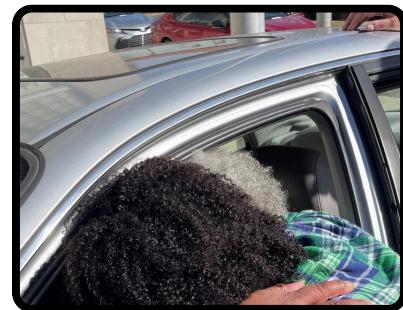
The Emergency shelter provides a safe place to stay for women and children to find immediate safety in their time of need. Case management services help to ensure that every guest receives special care to address their unique situations in an effort to get them back to a better situation.

Permanent Supportive housing offers adults and families the opportunity to rebuild their lives with ongoing social service support and chance to live in safe, affordable housing. This support, provided by First Light, offers in house case management, referrals, coordination of services, employment services, access to medical and mental health care.

With expanded onsite services guest have better access to health care, mental health and job readiness skills which will enable them to live a better productive life.



client being told she was accepted into our housing program and also gifted a car



"Thank you for all you done for me. I needed that in my life, the feeling of being able to lay down and rest knowing it was safe and clean. I had everything I needed- clean clothes, a place to wash, bathe and food, warm place to sleep, and the help from staff to get me on the right path. I am grateful for everyone there, that work there and lived alongside me. For a time of passing through.. thank you all very much."

former guest- Bed #9

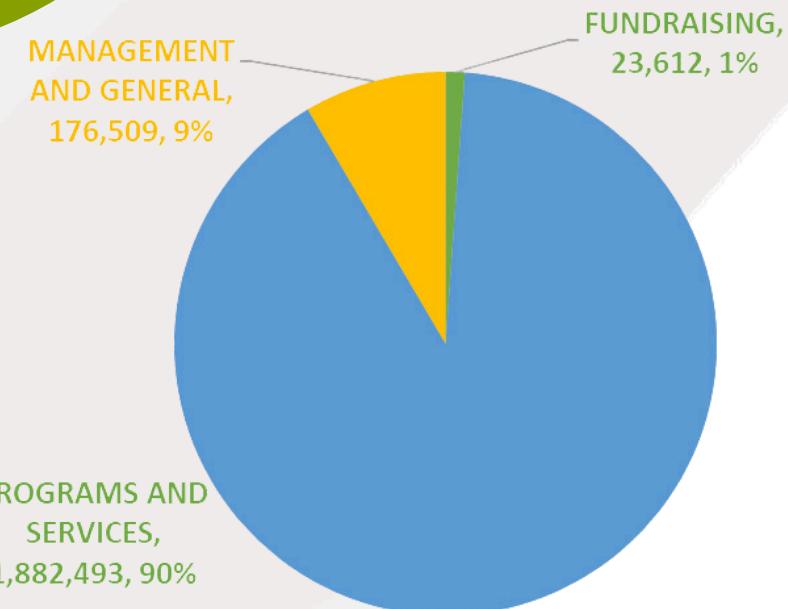
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

First Light continues to be good steward of its funds. Financial management continues to show that HUD, city, county and other community grants are used accurately and used for the purpose of housing and rehousing persons who are experiencing homelessness

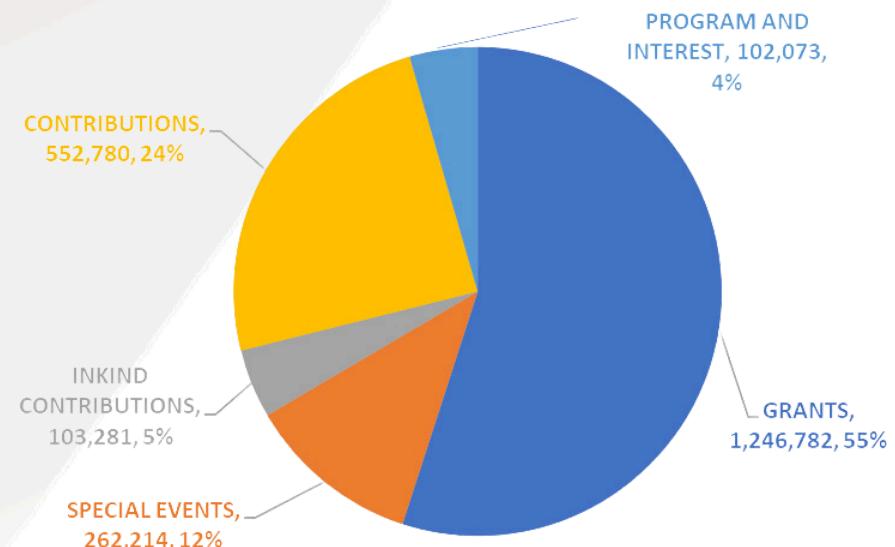
LEAVE A LEGACY

A planned gift is one of the most impactful ways you can support First Light. Planned giving options will help us continue our mission. With your support, our vision can be a reality.

EXPENSES



REVENUE & SUPPORT



SAVE THE DATE

20  24

BIG APPLE GALA

— *benefitting* —

FIRST LIGHT

A Center for Homeless Women and Children

THURSDAY
APRIL 25, 2024
6:00 IN THE EVENING

DINNER
DRINKS
LIVE AUCTION

THE FARRELL
2719 19TH STREET S
HOMEWOOD, ALABAMA

proudly presented by Pace

For more information contact casey@firstlightshelter.org



For tickets and giving, visit
FIRSTLIGHTGALA.SWELL.GIVES

FIRST LIGHT STAFF

Sherry Bray, LMSW, MPA
Executive Director

LeighAnn Johnson
Finance

Camilla Jones
Volunteer Coordinator

Casey Schaffer
Development Director

2230 4th Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203
205-323-4277
www.firstlightshelter.org

Social Service Team

Byanca Underwood, BA, MS
Director of Social Services

Chaquita Pendleton, MSW, Social Worker
Shulette Prince, BSW, Case Manager
Patricia Baker, BSW, Case Manager
Destiny Mills, BSW, Case Manager

Shelter Operations

April Graham, Shelter Manager
Rebecca Cleckley, Shelter Assistant
Jocelyn Cash, Shelter Assistant
Therese O'Hare, Shelter Assistant
Carmen Taylor, Weekend Manager
Pauline Word, Shelter Manager

Together, we make a difference.

