



# FIRST LIGHT

BE A BEACON

2025

# Annual Report



# Looking Ahead with Renewed Commitment

At First Light, we walk alongside women experiencing homelessness with compassion and understanding. Many arrive carrying the weight of trauma, loss, and uncertainty. We are committed to meeting each woman exactly where she is, without judgment, with patience, and with respect.

But our mission goes beyond providing a safe place to sleep. We believe in creating a community where women feel seen, valued, and included. Whether through shared meals, group activities, life-skills classes, or simply sitting together in conversation, we strive to foster connection and belonging.

And sometimes, what is most healing is the simplest act of all—laughter.

In the midst of hardship and the trials that many of our guests face each day, we find that there is still space for joy. We take time to be human together: to play games, celebrate milestones, share stories, and laugh. For many of the women we serve, laughter is a reminder that they are more than their circumstances. It is a powerful expression of resilience and hope. It is okay to laugh. In fact, it is necessary.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing dignified care, meaningful support, and opportunities for growth. We will continue to advocate for the women in our shelter, expand programming that promotes independence and stability, and create an environment where healing can truly begin.

Your support makes this work possible. Because of you, First Light remains a place of safety, compassion, and possibility.

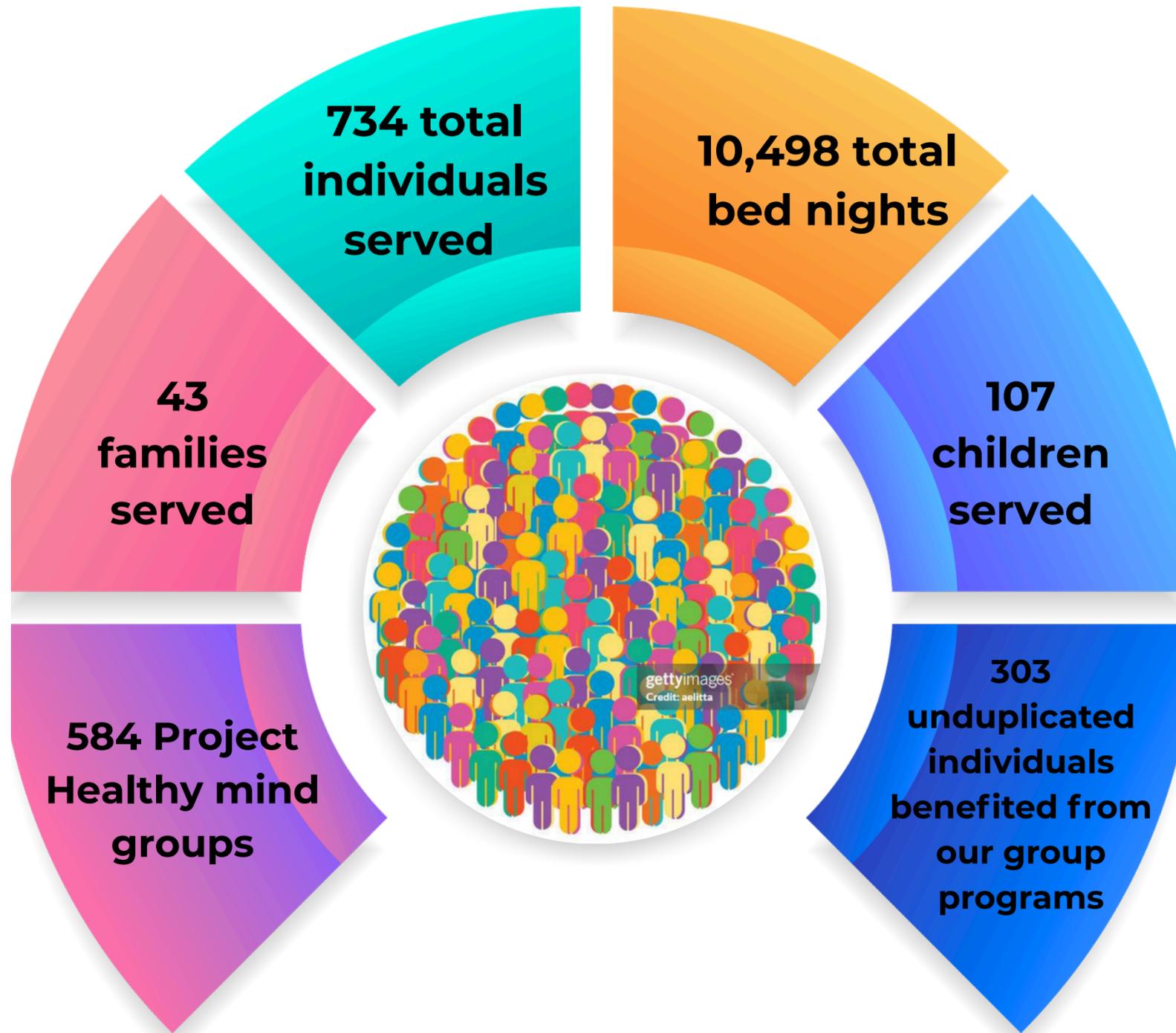
Thank you for standing with us. Together, we will continue to restore hope—one woman, one family, one moment at a time.



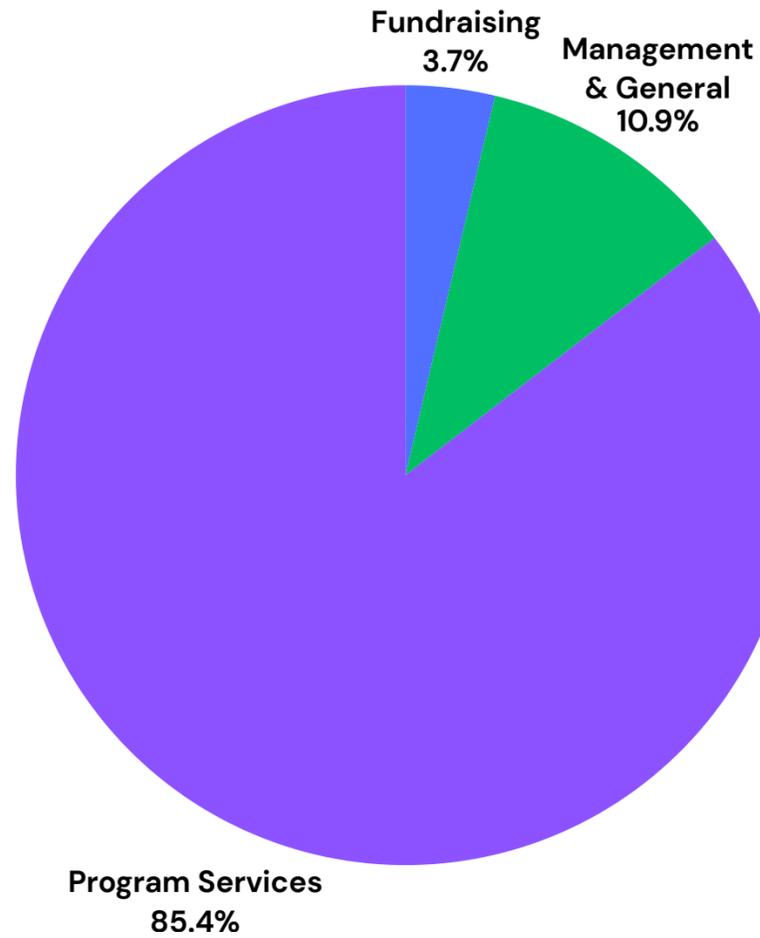
-Sherry Bray  
Executive Director

# Shelter Services: Providing Safety and Stability

Every individual who entered our doors received immediate access to safe accommodations, nutritious meals, and essential services designed to restore dignity and stability. All emergency shelter guests received thorough mental health assessments and personalized referrals, ensuring that each person's circumstances, challenges, and strengths were recognized and addressed. This approach allowed us to connect individuals with the specific resources and support services they needed to move toward lasting stability. Behind every number is a story of resilience, courage, and hope. Because of the generosity of our community, lives were stabilized, families were strengthened, and brighter futures began to take shape.



# EXPENSES



# FINANCIALS

We are deeply grateful for the unwavering commitment to our mission of providing safety, stability, and hope to those experiencing homelessness.

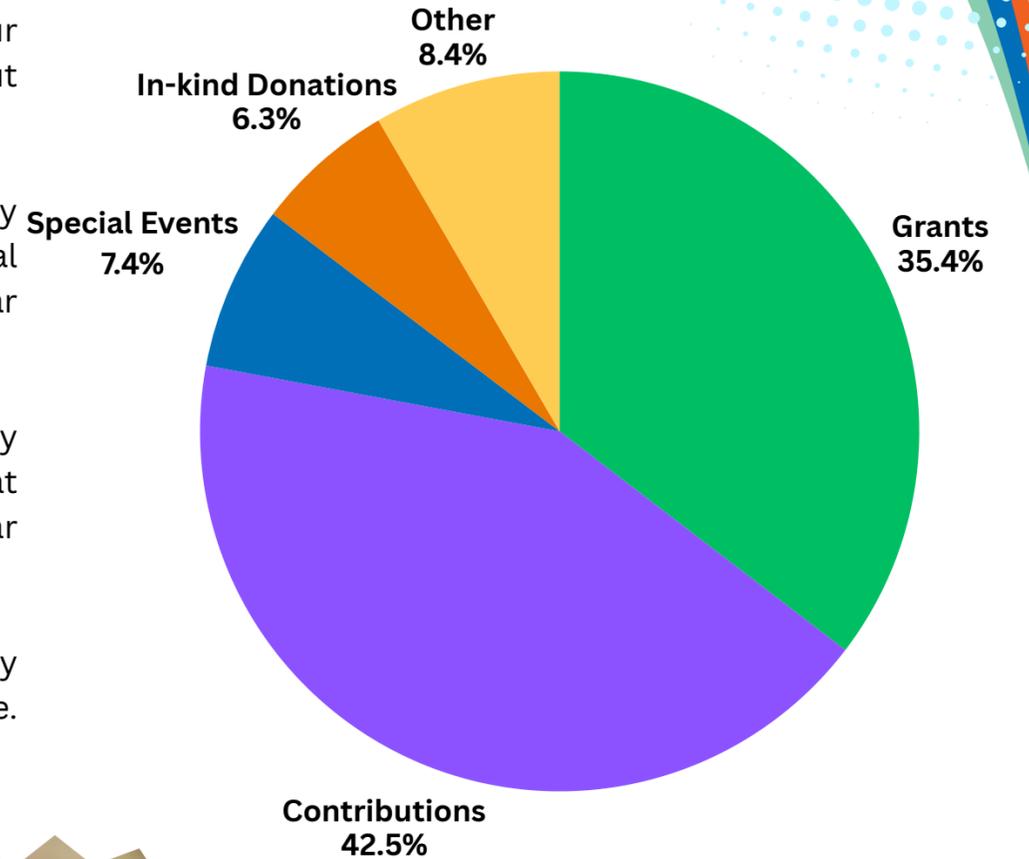
Together, we served individuals and families navigating some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Your generosity – through donations, grants, special events, and in-kind support – made it possible for us to keep our doors open, our programs running, and our community thriving. None of this is possible without you.

Your contributions are a powerful reflection of how deeply this community believes in our work. Grants from foundations and partners provided essential additional support, while in-kind gifts from generous donors stretched every dollar even further.

The majority of our expenses went directly to Program Services – the emergency shelter providing direct case management services and wraparound support that transform lives. We are committed to being responsible stewards of every dollar entrusted to us, and this year's results reflect that dedication.

Your investment is more than a financial contribution. It is a declaration that every person deserves dignity, a safe place to sleep, and a path toward a brighter future. That is exactly what First Light delivers, thanks to partners like you.

# REVENUE



The Garage



Holy Trinity Greek Festival



Birmingham Retired Educators Association

# A FRESH START: Facility Renovations

When someone walks through our doors seeking shelter, they carry with them the weight of uncertainty, exhaustion, and hardship. What they deserve – what we believe every person deserves – is to be met with warmth, safety, and dignity. Thanks to your incredible generosity, we are proud to share that our shelter bathrooms, showers, lobby and day space have been fully renovated, and the difference it has made in the lives of our guests is beyond what words can fully capture.

## Why the Renovations Were Needed

For years, parts of our facility had been showing their age. For individuals already navigating some of life's most difficult challenges, walking into a bathroom can deepen feelings of invisibility and neglect.

Our staff had identified the need for a complete overhaul for some time. We knew that renovated facilities would not only improve hygiene and safety but would send a powerful message to every person who uses them: you matter, and you are welcome here.



## What Your Support Made Possible

The renovation project was made entirely possible through the donations and support of people like you. Because of your commitment to our mission, we were able to complete a full transformation of the facilities, including all-new plumbing and water-efficient fixtures, non-slip tile flooring throughout, improved lighting that is both energy-efficient and welcoming, fresh paint and updated finishes that create a clean, dignified atmosphere, and accessibility improvements to better serve guests with mobility challenges. The results have been remarkable. Residents have shared that access to clean, functional facilities has helped them feel more ready to take on the day. Projects like this one are only possible because of a community of supporters who believe, as we do, that every person deserves to be treated with dignity.

We are grateful beyond measure. You have helped us build not just better spaces – you have helped us build a better foundation for the people we serve every single day.



## A Door that Opens to the Future: Stephanie's Story and the Power of Permanent Housing

Morning always comes early at the shelter, but this one felt different.

Each morning, a yellow school bus stopped outside the shelter to pick up a five-year-old girl and take her to school. Her mother, Stephanie, a single parent working toward stability, watched her climb aboard with a backpack nearly as big as she was, shoes tied carefully so she would not trip and clothes that made her look like everyone else in her first-grade class—safe, on time, and ready to learn.

Stephanie had done everything she could to keep life steady while the ground beneath her shifted. The shelter was safety and stability for herself and her daughter. It was at First Light that she learned a little more patience, learned how strong she truly was, and how hope could still show up in small, ordinary ways like a school bus arriving on time every morning.

But this was the last pickup from that corner for five-year-old Anna.

Later that afternoon, Stephanie unlocked the door to a small apartment of their own where she could continue to receive support and guidance through one of First Light's permanent housing programs. The rooms were quiet, a little empty, but filled with possibility. There was no shelter schedule to follow, no shared space to navigate—just a place where her daughter could do homework at the kitchen table and sleep in the same bed every night.

When helping Mom navigate the change in bus schedules, she looked up and said, "You know, this was not my stopping place—it was a bridge we had to cross." That bridge carried both uncertainty and hope, a space between simply surviving and beginning again. The yellow bus would still come; it would just stop somewhere new—at their new home. For Stephanie and her daughter, housing did more than provide shelter. It became the foundation for stability, education, and a true fresh start.

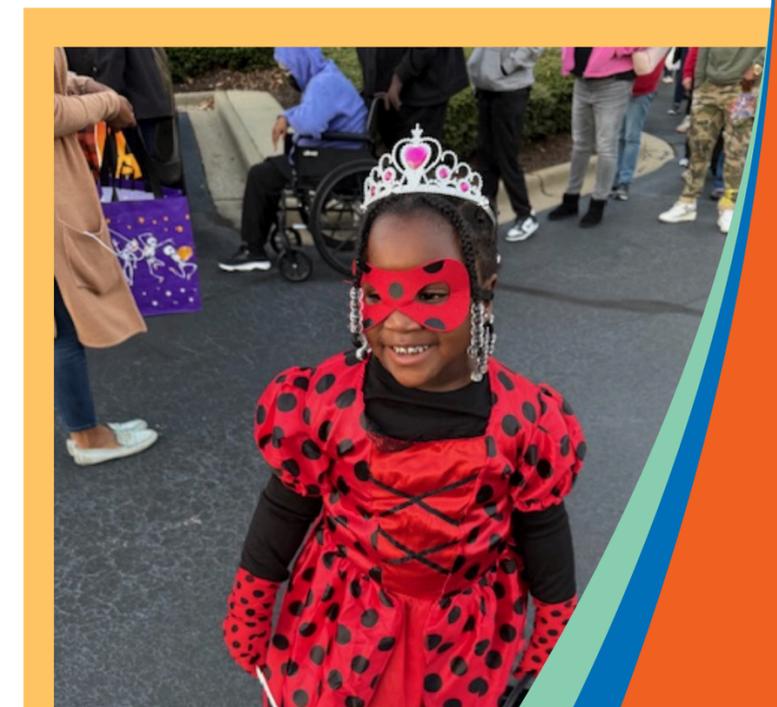
# What is Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) provides more than a place to live—it offers stability, dignity, and the ongoing support families need to thrive.

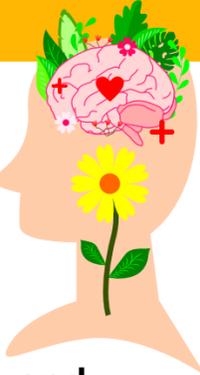
For Stephanie and her five-year-old daughter, PSH means moving from the emergency shelter into a safe, permanent home of their own. With housing no longer in question, mornings became routine and a little easier. Her daughter could catch the same school bus every day, return to the same address each afternoon, and focus on learning instead of uncertainty.

Alongside stable housing, supportive services help Stephanie maintain employment, find support systems in her community, provide a listening ear and the reassurance that she does not have to walk through this new journey alone. This supportive housing program provides financial assistance, ongoing case management as well as access to resources that they may need.

Permanent Supportive Housing gave this family what every family deserves, a stable foundation. With a consistent home, a child's education stays on track, a parent's stress is reduced, and a future once defined by survival becomes one filled with possibility.



# Project Healthy Minds 2.0



Project Healthy Minds is our holistic wellness and life skills program designed to nurture the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of the women and children we serve. Through art therapy, enrichment activities, support groups, and practical life skills classes, the program equips our guests with tools that strengthen resilience, build confidence, and promote long term stability. From financial literacy and career readiness to group therapy, creative expression, and health focused activities, Project Healthy Minds creates meaningful opportunities for growth in a safe and encouraging environment.

We are excited to share the relaunch of Project Healthy Minds, a refreshed and strengthened version of this vital program designed to better serve our guests both during their stay and as they transition out of shelter. We recognized the need to revamp the program to ensure our guests are receiving the support they need not only for today, but for a successful future beyond shelter. Because consistency is key to building healthy habits and lasting change, we now offer a variety of activities that take place on a weekly, biweekly, and monthly basis. We have also reintroduced our Points Program, an incentive-based system that encourages participation by allowing guests to earn points for attending activities and redeem them for rewards. This structure promotes engagement while reinforcing accountability and goal setting.

We are deeply grateful for the dedicated volunteers who faithfully give their time and talents on a consistent basis to lead these sessions and invest in our guests. Be sure to check out some of the activities and meet the incredible volunteers who now make up our Project Healthy Minds Program on the following pages .





**PAMELA BALOUGH**

Praise Dance and Movement  
Activity



**EMILY ATHERTON**

Resume and Job Application  
Assistance



**SHEILA RICE**

Women's Support Group



**SAVANNAH LOGAN**

"Art with Savannah"- Arts and  
Crafts Activity



**MICHELE WATTS & FRIENDS**

Arts and Crafts & Movie Therapy



**LESLIE DEASON**

Self-Help Podcast &  
Card Making Activity



**VENESIA WILLIE**

Monthly Birthday  
Celebration Activity



**TIFFANY LOGAN**

"Tea Time with Tiff"- Inspirational  
and Motivational Activity



**CORYNNE STEWART**  
Chair Yoga



**EVE PARKER**  
"Art with Eve" - Arts and Crafts  
Activity



**LAURIE THOMPSON**  
Crocheting, Knitting, and Art  
Activity



**I AM U VILLAGE/  
RECOVERY RESOURCES**  
Substance Use & Mental Health  
Support Group



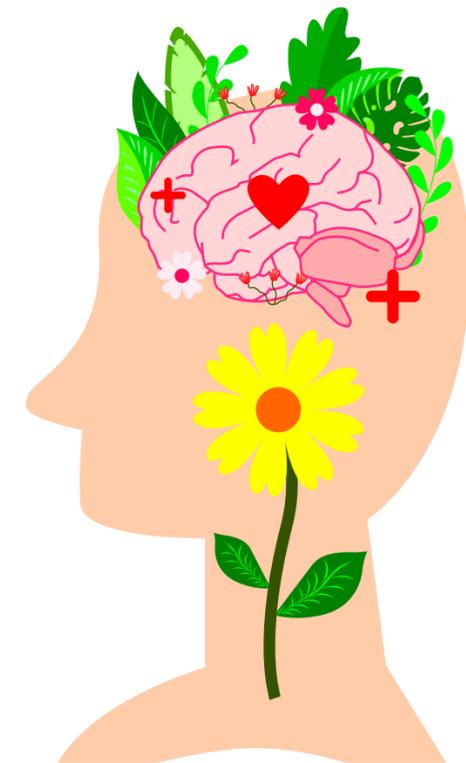
**BROOKE LAWSON**  
"Moving to Heal" - Exercise and  
Movement Activity



**DANIELA CHAPA**  
"Español with Dani" - Spanish  
Learning Activity



**MADELEINE AND AYDEN TAYLOR**  
"Mommy Free Time" -  
Activity for Children



# VOLUNTEER *Spotlight* BLUFF PARK UMC THURSDAY QUILTERS

We are delighted to shine a light on the Bluff Park UMC Thursday Quilters, a devoted group of volunteers whose generosity and compassion have warmed the hearts of First Light guests for many years. This talented team gathers each week to hand quilt beautiful, one of a kind pieces that are donated directly to the women and children in our emergency shelter. On average, they gift us five quilts every month, a remarkable contribution that speaks to their commitment and steady support.

Every quilt is crafted with patience, intention, and a deep sense of care. The thoughtful selection of fabrics, the intricate stitching done by hand, and the many hours invested in each piece come together to create something far more meaningful than a blanket. These quilts provide comfort during uncertain times and often become cherished keepsakes for the families who receive them. For a guest who may have left everything behind, receiving a handmade quilt is a touching reminder that someone took the time to create something just for them. The love woven into these quilts extends far beyond the material. It represents community, compassion, and hope. The Thursday Quilters continue to model what it means to serve with heart, and their dedication has made a lasting impact on countless lives at First Light.

We are profoundly grateful for this faithful group and for the beauty and warmth they share month after month.



# VOLUNTEER *Spotlight*

## ANGELA CHISHOLM & Sixth Avenue Baptist Church W.O.M.

We are honored to highlight Angela Chisholm and the Sixth Avenue Baptist Church Women on Mission, two extraordinary forces of compassion who continue to make a meaningful impact at First Light. Angela has been a dedicated supporter for more than fifteen years, giving her time, energy, and heart to meet the needs of our guests in so many thoughtful ways. She has collected items for holiday gift bags, supported our permanent housing residents, helped meet urgent needs, and organized contributions through both her church and workplace.

Alongside her daughter, Angela provides a hot breakfast each month for our guests and leads a monthly Bible study with the Women on Mission group, offering connection and encouragement. Her leadership has also inspired special activities such as spa days where volunteers provide facials, massages, manicures, and gift baskets, helping our guests feel refreshed and valued.

The Sixth Avenue Baptist Church Women on Mission continue to show their generosity throughout the year. They visit to serve meals, lead monthly Bible studies, host uplifting activities like spa parties and theatrical plays, and collect essential items on a recurring basis to support our guests. The group also steps in to meet specific needs as they arise, assisting with car repairs, gathering supplies for a new mom-to-be, and responding to many other urgent situations with compassion.

We are truly grateful for Angela and the Women on Mission team. Their faithful service continues to make a lasting difference, surrounding the women and children of First Light with compassion, encouragement, and meaningful support.





first light

**May 7th, 2026**

The Kress Building  
5:30 PM VIP | 6:30 PM GA

# Illume

*A Brighter Way to Gala*



PRESENTED BY



Solving Logistics Together

**Illume: A Brighter Way to Gala is First Light's signature annual fundraising event that brings together community leaders, supporters, and advocates in support of the nonprofit's mission to offer those experiencing homelessness stable emergency shelter, access to housing programs, and the resources for them to achieve their full potential. To learn more and to purchase tickets, please click the button below.**

[Click Here](#)



# first light

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## FIRST LIGHT STAFF

### Social Service Team

**Chaquita Pendleton, MSW, Program Coordinator**

Shulette Prince, BSW, Case Manager  
Rebekah Schollmeyer, BA, Case Manager  
Alexa Hall, BS, Case Manager  
Octavia Pointer, BS, Case Manager

**Sherry Bray, LMSW, MPA  
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### Shelter Operations

**April Graham, Shelter Manager**

Geneva Sanders, Receptionist  
Rebecca Cleckley, Shelter Assistant  
Therese O'Hare, Shelter Assistant  
Carmen Taylor, Weekend Manager  
Pauline Word, Weekend Manager

2230 4th Ave North Birmingham, AL 35203

(205) 323-4277

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