

FIRST LIGHT

ANNUAL REPORT
2005-2006



hospitality ♦ hope ♦ safety ♦ community ♦ dignity ♦ opportunity

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Dear Friends,

On behalf of the board, staff, volunteers and guests of First Light, I'd like to express our sincere gratitude for your generous support of our organization. First Light is proud of the care and services we provide to our guests, and more importantly, the opportunity we provide for them to improve their circumstances. Through our many programs, ranging from the counseling and life skills programs to our Affirmation and Healing through Art program, we strive to make a positive impact on the lives of our guests. We can't accomplish our objectives without your assistance, and we hope we can count on your continued support in the future.

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Ask Me About My Cross



Board Members Betty Drennen (left) and Nancy Skinner (right) display the crosses made by First Light guests.

As First Light board members and active volunteers, **Betty Drennen** and **Nancy Skinner** have found their own way of helping to raise money for the shelter and advocate for the homeless women and children in our community. Betty and Nancy have set a new fashion trend by simply wearing crosses handmade by guests in Creative Adventures, First Light's art therapy program,



Busy hands create a cross from wire and recycled beads. The cross project has raised over \$7,000 for the shelter.

The cross craze started when Betty Drennen purchased four crosses at the annual First Light Gala. "I bought a cross at the Gala and wore it to my Bible class at IPC...That's all it took! I started selling them off my neck. Thousands of dollars later we are still going strong," said Betty.

"When Betty and I realized how many people were learning about First Light by wearing and selling the crosses, we became even more positive about what

could be done by opening a conversation about homeless women and children in our community. *The crosses we wear are constant reminders of our faith and our dedication to First Light,*" said Nancy Skinner.

Marilyn Gross, First Light's volunteer art therapy program coordinator said, "Much to our amazement, First Light has raised more than \$7,000 this year for the shelter from the sale of \$5, \$10 and \$15 crosses! Of course, the purpose of the art therapy program has nothing to do with money or income from sales. It is about healing and restoring lives. I have witnessed God's hand at work in this simple project. *The women who come to First Light arrive with lives that are fragmented, broken and in need of mending, just like the old jewelry and broken beads that are donated to our art program.* Jewelry that was once in pieces, soon to be discarded, is reworked and transformed into something new-- the cross of Christ, a symbol of struggle, mercy, forgiveness, love and hope. And with God's help, the women who come through the doors of First Light are given a second chance. People are being refashioned, and through the grace of God, lives are being mended, and women are given a new opportunity to start over, to begin again."

ABOUT THE COVER

In Creative Adventures, First Light's weekly art therapy class, shelter guests were asked to describe the Garden of Eden, depicted in Genesis as a place of beauty where all needs were taken care of by God. The Garden was described as a lush, green, beautiful place where humans lived with animals and nature in peace. **There was no conflict, pain, jealousy, hunger, homelessness or war.**

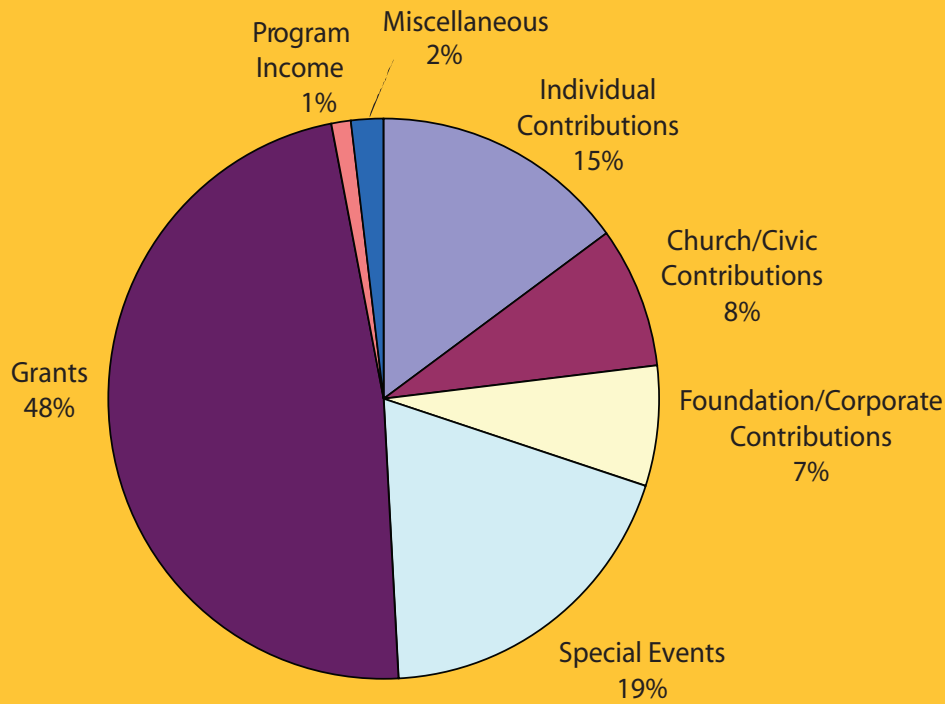
Guests were asked to imagine such a place, think about living there today and not being homeless any longer. The question was then asked: "What would your own Garden of Eden look like?"

Using available materials, each woman created a picture describing Eden, their place of joy, rest and peace. When asked to imagine what her Garden of Eden would look like, one guests replied, "I already know that place. Sometimes when life gets really bad, I have to go there in my mind." Her Eden paints the cover of this annual report.

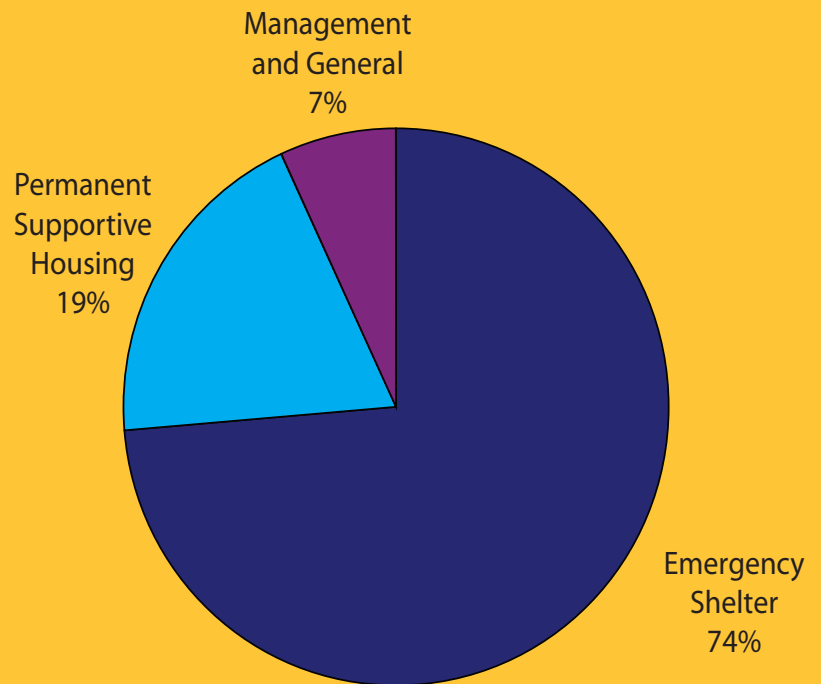


FY 2006 Revenue

\$668,842
unaudited
July 2005 - June 2006



FY 2006 Expenses



First Light Volunteers Shine

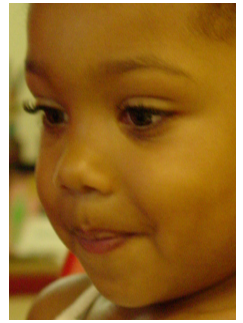
1,601 volunteers

9,327 hours of volunteer time

395 meals

185 individual and group donations of wish list items

JULY 1, 2005 - JUNE 30, 2006



Emergency Shelter

First Light provided 14,581 nights of shelter for an unduplicated 895 guests: 784 homeless women and 111 children.

419 mental health assessments were completed and documented for emergency shelter guests.

Of the 895 women and children served at First Light during the fiscal year, only 58 returned during the year.

85% suffer from mental illness

59% are active or recovering addicts

90% have been abused at some point in their lives

17% have a physical disability

7% are veterans

Counseling and Life Skills Programs

Program	Total # of classes	Total # of participants
Project Healthy Minds Group Counseling and Life Skills	59	395
Creative Adventures! (art therapy program)	42	570
Bible Study	133	882
Rhythms of the Soul (music therapy program)	33	341
Harp Circle (shelter and community harp lessons)	16	138
GED Preparation Classes	22	71

Permanent Supportive Housing

First Light provided 9 units of permanent supportive housing for 13 women with serious mental illnesses.

100% of residents met with a psychiatrist at least once every 6 months.

92% of residents complied with psychiatrists' treatment recommendations.

100% of residents participated in at least 2 life skills programs per month.

70% of residents participated in at least 4 hours of outside activity (i.e. volunteer work, exercise or programs) per month.

Transportation Program

Transportation assistance is provided to emergency shelter guests who do not have an income. This program is vital for helping First Light guests get out of homelessness. In addition to providing bus tokens, First Light also pays for taxi cab service in necessary situations. Providing cab service to the emergency room when an ambulance is not crucial saves guests an ambulance bill they most likely cannot afford to pay. The following is a summation of transportation destinations and the number of trips.

Doctor/hospital: 207

Obtain ID card: 45

Work: 109

Community Resources: 156

Job Search: 98

(food stamp office, addiction treatment programs, job training programs, etc.)



Thank You for

July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2006

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**"There was
laughter and cursing,
joy and tension,
needs met and unmet-
just like home...
and
there was God's love."**

**-Bobbie Epting
overnight volunteer
Independent Presbyterian Church**

Creative Adventures!

Affirmation and Healing through Art



Marilyn Gross, Volunteer Art Therapy Coordinator (right); Gwendolyn Burks, program participant (left)

Led by Marilyn Gross, First Light's volunteer art therapy coordinator, the guests of First Light's emergency shelter and residents of the permanent supportive housing program participate in a weekly art therapy program called Creative Adventures! Affirmation and Healing through Art. "Creating art is an opportunity for the guests and residents of First Light to do something different, to forget for one moment about all of the pain in their lives that led them to homelessness and to gain a sense of accomplishment," said Art Therapy Coordinator, Marilyn Gross. "Whenever there is illness, brokenness, and pain, there is a diminishment of soul. Making art can be a pathway of healing and a source of comfort, enhancing life and well-being. Art can also be an opportunity to rebuild social skills—a way to reconnect to the world."

Special Thanks

Visiting Artists and Volunteers

Alley Bulka, Robin Wilson (Photography by Design), Sheila Cook, Bettina Cardella, Spring Olsen, Jan McElroy, Suzanna Montgomery, Sister Margaret Sullivan, students from UAB and Birmingham Southern College

Donors

Alacare Home Health and Hospice, Valeri Cowart, Sheila Cook, United Methodist Women

A very special thanks to Publix Supermarket for contributing baked goods weekly for art class participants!



NOTE CARDS FOR SALE

The First Light note card set makes a unique gift!

Each set includes 10 blank note cards and envelopes featuring artwork by guests of First Light in the art therapy program!

On sale now for only \$10⁰⁰!

All proceeds benefit First Light.

Note cards can be purchased at First Light or on our secure web site:

www.firstlightshelter.org

Photography by Robin Wilson

...helping lives through creative expression

In Memory of..

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John and Phoebe Thornton

Hoyt Phillips

Eugene and Jan McElroy

Jimmie Vaughn

Carol Myers

Martha Graves

Robert and Nancy Brooks

Robert and Nancy Hess

Barbara Shaw

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Chris and Kay Kelly

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Duncan and Terry Hamilton

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Mattie Johnson, Volunteer of the Year
with Ruth Crosby, Executive Director

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Mattie Johnson

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Claire Fairley, Gala Honoree, surrounded
by friends and family: Arthur Fairley, James
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Muriel Teague

Sabert Oglesby
Isabel Palmer
Wray Pearce
Elizabeth Phillips
Caroline Raughley
Nell Rush
Edward Senter and Jessica Germany
Earle and Sheila Shugerman
Richard Simmons
Lorraine Smith
Marshall and Marilyn Snow
Richard and Nancy Turpen
Ann Wade
Mike and Anne Warren
Robert and Valerie Watson
Frances Wells
Amanda Wilson
First Commercial Bank
O'Neal Steel
Walter Schoel Engineering Company, Inc.
Lightfoot, Franklin, Rose and White, LLC

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you for brightening the lives of homeless women and children during the holiday season!

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Mr. and Mrs. Mark C. Aldridge
Ms. Carolyn G. Allison
Mr. and Mrs. Scott Anderson
Ms. Lynn Baxley Ault
Miss Heather Austin
Ms. Emily R Baillio
Mr. John S. Baldwin and Son Yong
Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Bell
Mr. and Mrs. Keven C. Belt
Mr. and Mrs. Davis W. Bennett, Jr.
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Southern Company Services
Alton B. Sturtevant Family Foundation
The Turner Foundation

Lights shined from the First Light building in honor and remembrance of your loved ones throughout the holiday season!

Thank you for helping to make this holiday card and light fund raiser so successful!

YOU Can Make A Difference!

Will you help provide shelter and essential services to homeless women and children in a place of hope and love that has a sense of home and family?

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

\$10,000 or more

\$5,000 - \$9,999

\$1,000 - \$4,999

\$500 - \$999

\$250 - \$499

\$100 - \$249

\$1 - \$99

Benefactor

Patron

Investor

Sponsor

Sustainer

Advocate

Friend

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

This contribution is made in honor of in memory of

Name: _____

Send acknowledgment to: _____

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Enclosed is my check for: \$ _____ (made payable to First Light).

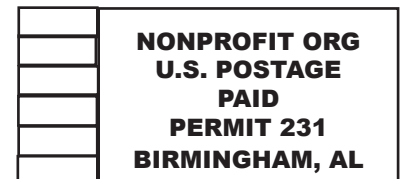
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This is an anonymous gift. Your name will not be published in the annual report.

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FIRST LIGHT
2230 FOURTH AVENUE NORTH
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35203



(205) 323-4277

www.firstlightshelter.org

