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FIRST LIGHT

A Center for Homeless Women and Children

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www.firstlightshelter.org

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THE LIGHT
Fall 2022 Edition



FIRST LIGHT
A Center for Homeless Women and Children

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



Hello and Welcome from Sherry Bray

As the new Executive Director, but not new to First Light, I am humbled and honored by the opportunity to lead such an amazing agency. First Light is not just a warm place to sleep or a delicious meal provided by our faithful volunteers, but it is a place of hope and refuge for many seeking shelter every day. It is our goal to provide people with the tools they need to rebuild their lives, seek opportunities for growth, and achieve their greatest potential. The plight of homelessness continues to affect families and individuals across the country, and right here in Birmingham. Addressing the complex issues of homelessness, inequality, and affordable housing requires a committed effort in collaboration with our supporters and our community.

At First Light we are looking at ways to better serve our population. We are refreshing and revitalizing our services to ensure that our guests' needs are addressed in a more holistic manner. We will look at new approaches that respect and integrate the trauma experienced by our guests, and which appreciate their history to help them move forward to a brighter future. The work we do is ongoing and I am grateful for this opportunity, and for the staff and all of you who make First Light a true beacon in the city. As First Light continues to take on challenges, I hope we can count on you to help us be game changers so those we serve can thrive and live out their full potential.

Trauma-Informed Design and Homelessness

It has been scientifically proven that an individual's physical environment can directly affect their mood, attitude and behavior. There is a strong link between a person's physiological and emotional state and the physical environment they are experiencing.

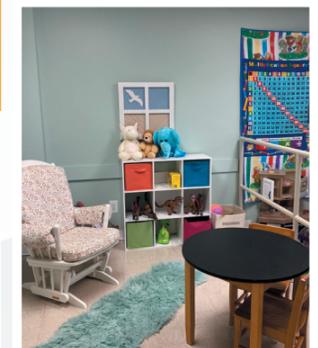
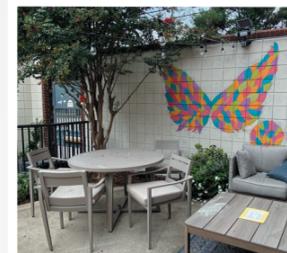
First Light has been very intentional in creating a space that not only provides shelter but promotes healing, dignity, and joy where people can thrive.

complete makeover which includes a relaxing covered space, new potted plants, new seating and a feeling of peace.

Feelings of Home

Implementation of the trauma-informed care model included a makeover of the living space of the residents in our fourth-floor permanent supportive housing program. Their day space, kitchen, bathroom, and bedrooms were renovated to be less cluttered and more attractive and comfortable for them.

This makeover included a new table with six chairs. Residents say that having a table makes it feel more like a home—encouraging them to cook, gather, and eat together and to share conversations and experiences.



With careful thought to colors, furniture, and to creating a safe, trauma-informed space that helps to support recovery from homelessness, we and our volunteers and board members have created many different areas of the shelter that have proven to be relaxing and warming to shelter guests. Fresh flowers now adorn the lobby every week. A children's room and an outside play area have been created to provide space for families to come together and enjoy each other. The outside patio has a



PRESENTING SPONSOR

EBSCO Industries

EBSCO Industries CEO, David Walker, says “empowerment without abandonment and investing for the long term is how EBSCO attracts and fosters durable businesses.” This is how EBSCO has become one of the largest privately held companies in the United States. That commitment to the future is also why EBSCO has invested in our mission since First Light was incorporated more than 22 years ago. When First Light’s founders looked to the community for support to build an emergency shelter for homeless women and their children, EBSCO Industries began a partnership that will change lives for generations.

EBSCO’s charitable work is committed to creating positive results throughout our community financially and through volunteer service. They recognize that “each of us are in a position to help create the community we desire — a community that values inclusion and strives toward equity among its citizens.” EBSCO is a responsible and generous corporate citizen that makes our community stronger and our future brighter. We are proud that EBSCO Industries is the presenting sponsor of Dancing with the Stars of the Magic City and we are delighted to celebrate this generous partner in our mission.

FIRST LIGHT'S
DANCING WITH THE STARS
 OF THE MAGIC CITY
 PRESENTED BY
EBSCO INDUSTRIES, INC.

BENEFITTING THE HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF FIRST LIGHT
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2022 • 6:30 PM

THE LYRIC THEATRE , 1800 3rd AVENUE NORTH, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

AND BY LIVE STREAM

JOIN US!

www.firstlightstars.swell.gives



STARRING

SHELLEY GENTLE AND DAVID ODENWELDER • KIOMI GORNIK AND SARAH GILES
DEBRA HAYS AND LILLIAN COLE • JOSH HICKMAN AND ASHLEY TAYLOR
PRESCOTT KERUTIS AND JENNA GRAHAM • BOLAJI KUKOYI AND SYDNEY THOMAS
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GIN PHILLIPS AND JULIE WATTERS • FRANK PUGA AND JESSICA PONTE
REGGIE TORBOR AND HANNAH ECHOLS

THANK YOU TO OUR LEADING SPONSORS



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A Center for Homeless Women and Children

Holiday Lights 2022

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. Or you can do that online by clicking the Holiday Lights image at firstlightshelter.org or by scanning this code.

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



GIVING

Providing Hope Through Holiday Giving

First Light offers supporters several opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways to our shelter guests and those who have moved into apartments, thanks to our housing programs. If you would like to be a part of showing kindness to the women and children we serve for the holidays, please contact Camilla at 205-323-4277 or camilla@firstlightshelter.org.

Planned Giving

A planned gift to First Light will create an enduring legacy that reflects your values and commitment to the future. Ask your financial advisor to make sure your estate plans meet all your personal and philanthropic goals. A life insurance policy, retirement plan, or will is all you need to make a lasting impact on generations to come. Let us know if your estate plans include the homeless women and children at First Light.

JANIE'S STORY

“Janie” came into shelter after moving to Birmingham when she lost her job. She was a loner and kept mostly to herself but she had a quirky sense of humor that was inviting and welcoming to others. She often went and sat in her car during the day to listen to music or to sing. Janie was a musician. She sang and played the guitar. She even recorded music and some of her performances were published on YouTube. Janie wanted to be housed and she worked with the social services staff to move into First Light’s Permanent Supportive Housing Program where she received case management and supportive services. Janie would come to the shelter and tell stories of her music days and how happy she was to be housed and to have her independence. During the time that Janie was in the supportive housing program, she was diagnosed with breast cancer which was treated many times and which came back many times, becoming worse. Janie lost her battle with breast cancer this year. Her final days were comforted by the relationships she built with the staff of First Light who were with her in her last hours.

