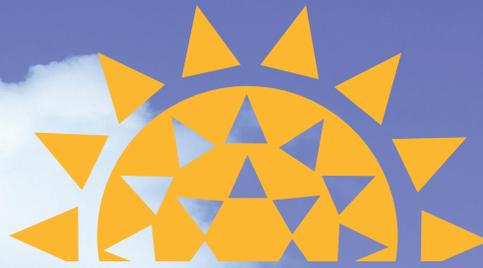


2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT



FIRST LIGHT

A Center for Homeless Women and Children

2014-2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The mission of First Light is to work with homeless women and their children to create hospitality in a safe and nurturing community, to encourage them to maintain dignity, to find hope, to seek opportunity, and to grow spiritually, thereby achieving their full potential.

*A blessing is a circle of light drawn around a person
to protect, heal and strengthen.*

—John O'Donohue

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Friends,

It is hard to believe that it has been 17 years since a small group of intrepid volunteers dared to ask our community to join them in making a place where homeless women and their children can find safety, opportunity, and hope.

They planned carefully. First Light actually started as the Women's Hospitality Shelter in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church 15 years earlier, in 1983—and over the years, these dedicated volunteers learned a lot about the complex needs of homeless women and their children. They understood that some homeless women are battling devastating mental illness, some are struggling with addictions that are destroying their lives, and many have never had the resources to address chronic medical conditions. Sometimes one mistake led to another. Sometimes bad things just happened. They knew that First Light had to be much more than a safe place to be. It has to be where the most vulnerable get the guidance and support they need to rebuild their lives.

The community stepped up. We rebuilt the old Granada Hotel and First Light opened the doors of the only emergency shelter in our area accessible to homeless women and their children 24 hours a day. We hire only professionals with degrees in social work from accredited colleges to provide wraparound social services to our guests. For those leaving the shelter who need help maintaining housing and their dignity, we developed supportive housing programs to make sure they

would stay safe and continue to get the help they need.

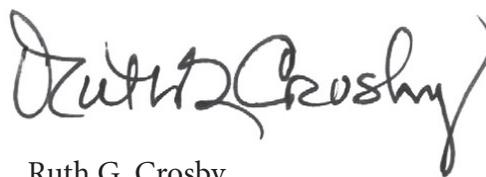
First Light will always be a community project. More than 1,000 volunteers each year let our guests know they are not forgotten.

When we opened the shelter, we thought we might need some space for a woman with a child—so we set aside a small family room with space for a crib or two. We had no idea that 15 years later, 252 children would be seeking shelter at First Light in one year! Or that we would have to put mats out every night so women and children could sleep on the floor and not be turned away.

It's nice to look back. But now we're looking to the future. We are being called upon to do more and we will find a way to do more. We know we live in a community that will step up.

Thank you for being the light that makes First Light shine.

Sincerely,



Ruth G. Crosby
Executive Director



Photograph by Lewis Kennedy,
Kennedy Studios

Deep in their roots,
all flowers keep the light.

—Theodore Roethke



Hope is being able to see
that there is light despite all of the darkness.
—Desmond Tutu



Emergency Shelter

The only emergency shelter accessible to homeless women and their children 24 hours a day, First Light is much more than a safe place to sleep. Every guest gets personal attention from a professional with a degree in social work from an accredited college to help her develop and adhere to a plan of action to rebuild her life. **More than 1,000 volunteers each year** serve at the emergency shelter, serving meals, staying overnight, sharing activities, teaching skills, and letting guests know they are part of a caring community.

Because the emergency shelter is almost always full, mats are put out in the day room so up to 20 more guests will not be turned away. This year, **1,017 homeless women and children** found safety, opportunity and hope at First Light's emergency shelter.



The number of children seeking shelter at First Light has grown continuously for the past five years. In 2014-2015, 252 children found safety in a nurturing community at First Light.

Supportive Housing

When a guest is ready to leave the shelter, she may need a helping hand to stay safe or to provide her children with the stability and nurturing they need. Federal and community support enables First Light to continue to provide professional wrap-around social services for these most vulnerable members of our community so they can sustain housing and have a chance to reach their full potential. This year:

Nine women and six children found safety in the only transitional supportive housing program in our community for victims of domestic violence who have no income.

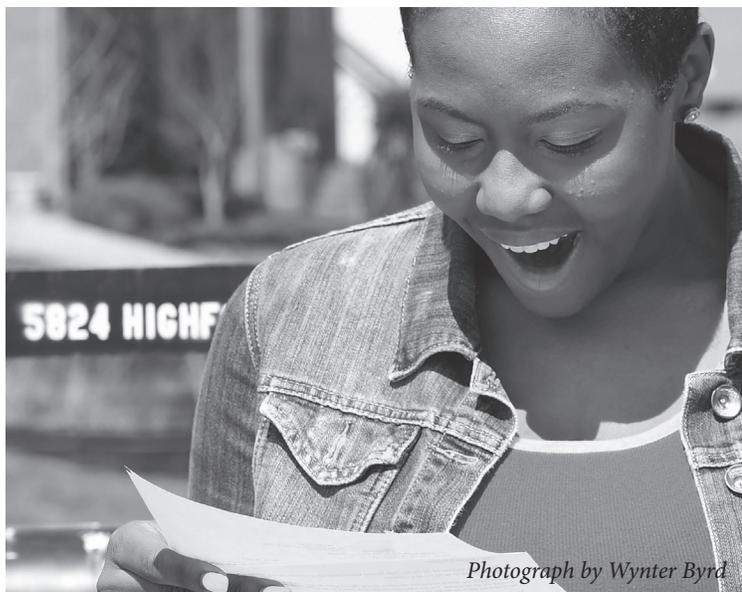
Thirteen women disabled by permanent mental health issues made a home for themselves in permanent supportive housing on the fourth floor of the First Light shelter.

Fourteen families, including nine children, got the professional attention that enabled them to remain housed in the Shelter Plus Care program.

Twenty-five chronically homeless and disabled women got the help they needed to maintain stability and stay off the streets in permanent supportive housing programs in Bessemer and East Birmingham.

Twenty women with disabling conditions had the professional care they needed in First Light's *Noah's Ark* permanent supportive housing program.

Seven families, including eighteen children, got financial support and social services in the only privately funded rapid-rehousing program in our community.



Photograph by Wynter Byrd

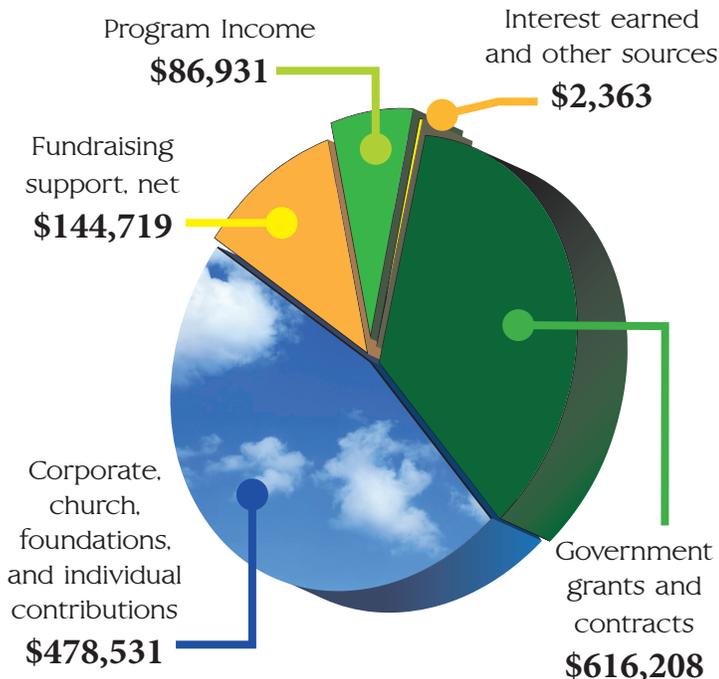
Homeless children experience developmental delays that hamper academic success and 21% (compared to 5% of other children) are held back in school because of excessive absenteeism.

But this teenager was in First Light's newest program, Forever Home, and she thrived. This year she got word that she was accepted into Alabama A&M University.

2014-2015 Financial Statement

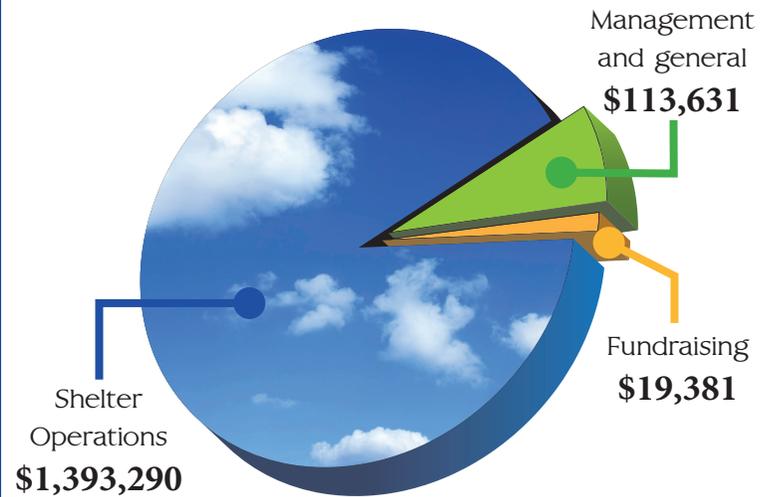
Support & Revenue

Total support & revenue..... \$1,328,752



Expenses

Total expenses..... \$1,526,302



Change in unrestricted net assets..... (\$197,550)
 Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year..... \$2,235,122
 Unrestricted net assets, end of year..... \$2,037,572

2014-2015 First Light Sponsors

Full Potential Society

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