

# Brother Francis Shelter Newsletter



A Catholic Social Services publication

December 2009

## Shelter Wish List

- Coffee
- Bread
- 8 oz. Styrofoam cups
- Plastic forks, knives & spoons
- Paper plates & bowls
- Bleach
- 33 gallon trash bags
- Cleaning sponges
- Warm hats, gloves & socks
- Underwear (all sizes, men & women)
- Shoes & boots
- Blue jeans (all sizes, men & women)
- Spray deodorant
- Toilet paper
- Disposable razors
- Feminine products
- Toothbrushes & toothpaste
- Sandwich baggies
- Vinyl gloves
- Pinesol

## BFS Advisory Council

Pat Byrne  
Kay Gajewski  
Marc June  
Greg Kimura  
Tom Kron  
Don Lederhos  
Lottie Michael  
Chuck Szopa

## BFS Guest Full of Hope & Purpose



*Irene*

**I**rene is a vivacious, enthusiastic Alaska Native Elder who is living strong and sober in permanent housing.

After years of scrimping to pay the rent Irene and her husband found they were unable to make ends meet and were evicted. A very difficult year of camping followed the eviction. Then her husband Walter suffered a serious illness and had to be hospitalized.

Without Walter, Irene decided it was too dangerous to camp alone and decided to investigate Brother Francis Shelter (BFS). She was very grateful that she did, "It is safe here, I like that," she reports.

Irene stayed at BFS for five months, while her husband was recuperating in an assisted living home. Irene found the routine at BFS helpful and got along very well with her case manager, Gwen. Gwen suggested that Irene look into joining the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training program (MASST) run by Nine Star.

Irene feels that the training she received through Nine Star was very beneficial and believes she could not have graduated from the training program if it had not been for all the encouragement she received from BFS staff and the fact that she was no longer drinking. Irene is very thankful that she successfully completed an out-patient treatment program prior to arriving at BFS.

Once Irene completed the MASST training program and her husband was released from the assisted living home, her

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**Thank you for helping to make the Spirit of Denali such a wonderful event!** Alaska Humanities Forum, Alaska Native Lutheran Church, Bean's Café, Shyanne Beatty, Crowley Maritime Services, Imamsua, Barbara Lavallee, Kingiikmuit Dancers, Masingka Dance Group, Miracle Drummers, Regis University, St. Francis Xavier Youth Group (from Valdez) and UPS.



## Christmas Wishes

During this Christmas season your help can make our wish of providing a gift to each shelter guest a reality! We need men's and women's shirts, shoes, boots and coats to be able to provide over 300 gifts. These items bring a bit of joy to our brothers & sisters at the shelter during a very difficult time in their lives.



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BFS case manager accessed a grant from Cook Inlet Housing Authority to help pay for her first month's rent and security deposit for the trailer the two are currently occupying.

Irene's story exemplifies why BFS works for many homeless individuals each year. So many of our guests are motivated and full of hope and purpose, they just need a bit of encouragement, guidance and a temporary roof over their heads where they can feel safe and supported.

As you may know, Catholic Social Service (CSS) operates Brother Francis Shelter. When you apply on-line for your Permanent Fund Dividend you have an opportunity to give all or a portion of your PFD to CSS to support the work of the shelter. For more information visit [PickClickGive.org](http://PickClickGive.org). **Thank you!**

**Thank you to the 138 Alaskans who picked, clicked and gave to CSS in 2009!**



### **What Would Your Home Look Like** if it were as full as ours?

An average of 222 individuals stay at BFS at night. If you lived in a 2,100 sq. ft. home (the median size for Anchorage), it means that **37 people** would be in your home for an extended holiday stay.

Think for a moment about the **morning shower routine**, the **increase in utility costs** for electricity and gas or the wear and tear on your home. It will be crowded, but because you care, there is a place to sleep.

You can help us provide a warm safe place for our guests with a gift to Brother Francis Shelter. For \$42 a month, you will be a part of the BFS 500 Club. Your gift will work all year long! Contact Adele Alderman at [aalderman@cssalaska.org](mailto:aalderman@cssalaska.org) or 222-7351 to find out more.

## A Full House for the Holidays



*Dewayne Harris  
BFS Program Director  
[dharris@cssalaska.org](mailto:dharris@cssalaska.org)  
or 277-1731*

**E**very year Brother Francis Shelter serves as a temporary home for over 3,000 people; during the holiday season when it is customary to dream of the comforts of home, this role takes greater prominence. Staff and volunteers at the shelter become extended family for the 250 to 300 guests who stay with us at Christmas. From late November until Christmas day we are all busy preparing stockings and wrapping gifts so that each guest will have a gift to open Christmas morning.

Over the past year the number of people seeking shelter has increased dramatically. During this past summer BFS reached its emergency capacity of 240 during several nights, which was a staggering number of people in the warm summer months.

We recently had to purchase 80 additional beds to ensure everyone who comes to BFS has a warm, safe place to sleep. In addition, Bean's Café is prepared to open its doors to serve as an emergency sleeping annex for an additional 124 guests. BFS has not seen such a high demand since the recession of the late 1980's and 1990's.

If the past Thanksgiving at Brother Francis Shelter is any indication of the need, we will definitely be reaching our Christmas projection of over 240. BFS served a record breaking 283 meals during Thanksgiving and

we were very grateful to have had enough food (with 28 turkeys and all the fixings) to share a traditional Thanksgiving meal together.

Your support is needed now to meet the demand for services. We are hoping to have enough new shirts, jackets, boots, hats and gloves for all of our guests. The cold Alaska winter ahead will be a challenging one for those who are experiencing homelessness this year and your support will make a big difference in someone's life.

Your gift this holiday season is urgently needed — whether it is clothing or a monetary donation. Thank you!

*Please join us for Christmas Eve Mass at 6:00 p.m. celebrated by Archbishop Roger L. Schwietz.*