

Brother Francis Shelter Newsletter



A Catholic Social Services publication

February 2010

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/paste
- Vinyl gloves
- Pinesol/Bleach
- Financial donations

BFS Advisory Council

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

Staying Focused

Lee's earliest memories are of hard work. He grew up poor in Cuba, where he learned to be a tireless worker, and immigrated to the United States ten years ago. Lee's journey north started in November of 2008, when he spent 13 days driving from Florida to Anchorage, spending every penny for gas & crackers to sustain him throughout the drive. Having misjudged the cost of his journey, he arrived in Anchorage with no funds available for housing and was referred to Brother Francis Shelter by a helpful employee at the employment office.

Lee is a big believer in staying focused. He is a skilled granite craftsman and came to Alaska seeking to improve his skills in other construction related areas. He has had great success with this focused approach and completed the Anchorage Construction Academy program. Completing the Academy program enabled him to get a certificate in basic plumbing and made him competitive for an apprenticeship program. Lee has recently been accepted into the Local 367 apprenticeship program for Alaska pipe trades.



Lee and his newly reunited family.

Lee is currently living in a duplex on Government Hill and recently reunited with his wife and six-year-old step-daughter (when they arrived from Florida). They had been separated for over a year and Lee used that time to improve his job skills and save money for housing by utilizing the services available at Brother Francis Shelter.

"I am very grateful to all the staff at Brother Francis! They encouraged me to take advantage of opportunities that would improve my job skills. I want to have a big umbrella of construction related job skills so that I am employable. Learning as many job skills as possible will protect me and my family" explained Lee.

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How Important Is It?

How important are your gifts to Brother Francis Shelter? Think for a moment about what gives you comfort. At BFS, we provide a warm, safe place to sleep, and we work every day to treat our guests with dignity. This is where your gifts come in. You help keep the lights and the heat on. You keep our guests warm, you give them access to information in the computer lab, and you provide showers and laundry service. You purchase everyday supplies that provide comfort to our guests. You give a warm coat, a pair of pants, and a pair of boots, hats and gloves from the Clothing Closet. All of these things add up to treating our guests with dignity. So, how important is your gift to BFS? We couldn't do it without you – THAT'S how important you are. Call Adele at 222-7355, or visit www.cssalaska.org to help! **THANK YOU!**

In the News

We support Rural Cap's proposed purchase of the Red Roof Inn to expand their Housing First program. Housing First rapidly houses homeless individuals who have been homeless for many years and have difficulty accessing and maintaining mainstream housing because of chronic alcoholism or untreated mental health issues. Supporting people in an environment where they are permanently housed has been implemented successfully in other communities.



A new way to help!

Wells Fargo account holders - YOU can provide basic needs to Brother Francis Shelter clients every time you use a Wells Fargo ATM! Please look for the donation opportunity when you visit your Wells Fargo ATM.

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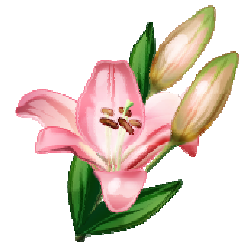
Lee felt that his extended stay at Brother Francis was very beneficial. He followed all the shelter guidelines – especially the one about saving 70 % of his income. He worked at a restaurant and at a granite shop during his tenure at BFS. Lee became very proficient at navigating the bus system and riding a bicycle because both of his employers were located in South Anchorage.

Many of our Brother Francis Shelter guests talk about how grateful they are to have access to the clothing room, an evening meal, showers and the laundry room and Lee was no exception. “The clothes I am wearing now came from the clothing room – they don’t need to be special just presentable and warm,” he said.

Lee is very excited that his step-daughter Ashley will be going to Government Hill Elementary with the Spanish immersion program. Lee knows how beneficial it is to be bi-lingual and he dreams of a successful life for Ashley. He feels strongly that success in life depends on your ability to respect others, follow the rules, be willing to take advantage of opportunities for improvement and above all else to stay focused on your goals – as he did during this time at BFS when he was separated from his family.

**Join us for Easter Mass
11:00 a.m., Sunday, April 4th**

**Celebrated by Archbishop Emeritus
Francis T. Hurley**



From the Streets to Home

For the homeless community of Anchorage, 2009 was made especially difficult by the deaths of fourteen people while they were camping. Catholic Social Services was very troubled that we were unable to engage these individuals and realized that a new approach was needed; we are especially sensitive to this topic because we serve over 3,000 homeless individuals per year at BFS.

We are often asked to provide insight into why a homeless person remains on the streets despite the many services available. Like other service providers we don’t always know the answer, so we convened a two day workshop early this month entitled “*From the Streets to Home.*”

The workshop presenters included “elders” in the Alaska Native community. Although we recognize homelessness spans all races and socioeconomic groups, we wanted

to explore the possibility that chronic homelessness was tied to loss of culture, community, and the spiritual connection that keeps many of us grounded.

Over the two day workshop, we were captivated by the cultural wisdom and knowledge of the presenters, Tina Woods (doctoral student at UAA), Larry Mercurieff (founder of Seven Generations Consulting), and Bob Aloysius, elder and teacher from Kalskag (outside of Bethel).

We heard that cultural knowledge is handed down from grandfathers, fathers, uncles, aunts and cousins to the youth through non-traditional methods. Knowledge isn’t gained through immersion in rote memorization and reading, but embedded in teaching and demonstrated by actions.

We learned the connection to the land is sacred and the spiritual aspect of this connection is transcended not in the visual aspect but

in the holistic mindset that the land is connected to the spirituality of each human being. We participated in group discussions to help give voice to the thoughts we carried during the presentation. The group laughed as we participated in games to relieve the tension after these oftentimes heavy topics; we joined together in prayer before the morning sessions began; and after breaks and lunch we were called back to our sessions by drumming.

After two intense days, we still seek answers to the questions that plague so many of us that work closely with this population. Yet, the one thing that I took away from the training was that the dignity of each person is to be respected and is paramount in healing; the same principles we find in the Catholic Social Teachings.



Susan Bomalaski, today’s guest columnist, is the CSS Executive Director and can be reached at sbomalaski@cssalaska.org