

# Brother Francis Shelter Newsletter



A Catholic Social Services publication

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

## BFS Advisory Council

Pat Byrne  
Kay Gajewski  
Greg Kimura  
Tom Kron  
Don Lederhos  
Lottie Michael  
Doug Poage  
Chuck Szopa

## Traveling Man Finds A Home

David Agrell has been on the road since he was 17. Originally from Maine, he has spent most of his adult life hitchhiking throughout the country. It was because of his beloved Grandfather that David found his way North. David has memories as early as five years old of his Grandfather's tales of Alaska.

When David first arrived in Anchorage in 2003, he had very little money and spent his first two weeks in town at Brother Francis Shelter (BFS). He quickly found a job and moved out of the shelter. Unfortunately due to a job layoff, he was back at BFS in 2006.

David entered the in-house volunteer program when he returned to the shelter and served as a monitor. Volunteer monitors are critical for the comfort and safety of our guests because they help to maintain the code of conduct that is expected of all residents. The nightly average at BFS is 176 and we have four volunteer monitors on each shift. This job is one of great responsibility and trust.

David did such a great job as a monitor that when a BFS job opened up he applied and was the successful candidate. He has been a



*David Agrell, former guest and current employee*

Catholic Social Services' employee for nearly 3 years. David has good things to say about his employment, "BFS is the best place I have ever worked. I truly believe that God led me here. I can't imagine doing more important work than serving homeless people – why, because I know these people – I have been one of these people. I know everyone of them has potential to change their lives."

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*The Benavides Family*

## Musical Ministry at BFS

Three Catholic Masses are celebrated each year at Brother Francis Shelter: the feast of St. Francis of Assisi is held in early October, Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday. A true celebration always includes beautiful music and BFS is fortunate to have dedicated and talented volunteers participating in these events. Jesse & Mary Benavides and Stacy Ruebelmann have been enhancing Masses at the shelter for five years. They feel blessed to be a part of the simple yet meaningful celebration that is hosted by the shelter three times a year.

Mary & Stacy are sisters and have been singing in multiple harmonies since they could talk.

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Their mother sang in a ladies group and often brought the girls along to rehearsal.

Jesse has been involved in music ministry for 20 years. He taught himself guitar and feels that he is best able to praise God through his playing.

The Benavides took a break from their weekly parish musical ministry group when their young daughter, Gabriella, was born. However, they still find time to support the Holy Family Cathedral Spanish Charismatic prayer group.

## Special Thanks

Elmendorf Officer's Spouses' Organization for their \$1,000 gift to be used to support our female guests.



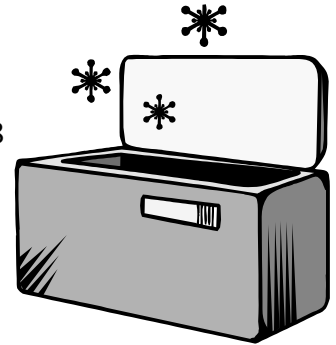
State of Alaska Department of Health & Social Services for funding the replacement of the 10-year-old washers and dryers through a grant. These machines wash approximately 29,200 loads a year — a daily average of 80 loads!

*Continued from page 1 — Traveling Man*

Since his childhood years spent in Maine, David has never lived in a place as long as he has in Alaska. He is grateful to live here — and yes — it has lived up to his Grandfather's stories! One of his great joys is photography, a hobby he didn't have much time or money for when he was living a life on the streets just struggling to survive. David explains, "Something as simple as a hobby was out of my reach when I was out there just drifting, now I am stable and can find joy in daily life."

David believes he has found a home in Anchorage; he likes his life and his work among the homeless. He is proud to serve as a role model for the BFS guests. "I respect the people who seek shelter here and see tremendous potential in them." David says.

Fishing season is just around the corner. That means it's time to clean out your freezer. Please consider donating your frozen 2008 salmon to BFS. We smoke the salmon and serve it to guests as part of the Spirit of Denali celebration. Contact Ellen Krsnak for more information at 222-7327 or [ekrsnak@cssalaska.org](mailto:ekrsnak@cssalaska.org).



**Join us for Easter Mass  
11:00 a.m., Sunday, April 12th**

## A Little Help Leads to Hope

When I listen to guests at the shelter share their frustrations ranging from the difficulty of finding a good job to locating an apartment that is affordable, I often wonder what more can we do to assist them as they get back on their feet.

A few weeks ago Mike, one of our guests, was about to move into his new apartment and stopped into the shelter to say goodbye. While I was visiting with Mike, I asked for his opinion about the services BFS offers and if they were helpful. He replied "The help I received from shelter staff and my case manager gave me the hope and perseverance I needed to be successful." His response was the answer to the question I had been pondering — and reaffirmed what I believe in my heart about what we do here at BFS — we do so much more than meeting the basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter.

Mike spent three months as a partici-

pant of the In-House volunteer program, where he was able to give back to the shelter while working to get his Social Security benefits started. Mike's case manager, Eric, was able to provide the missing paperwork he needed to get his housing voucher and assisted him in developing a budget and savings plan. These actions combined with Mike's perseverance led to a successful move into an apartment.

In addition to his own success, Mike is a role model for those just arriving at the shelter; by sharing his challenges and victories he is able to pass on the torch of hope to other guests. The hugs, smiles and tears that staff and guests share when we hear those magic words, "I got my apartment" only cements our belief that each one of our guests can be successful at reaching their goals. Success stories like Mike's and David's (featured on the front page) serve as fuel to motivate the guest who is feeling overwhelmed — a little help leads to a world of hope and success.



*Please use the enclosed envelope to give a gift to help the guests as BFS.*

*Your investment in the shelter allowed us to serve 808 people in February. The nightly guest average was 235 and 4,824 dinners were served.*

**Thank you for helping the homeless of Anchorage make it through the winter!**



*Dewayne Harris  
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or 277-1731*