

Brother Francis Shelter Newsletter



A Catholic Social Services publication

October 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
Chuck Szopa

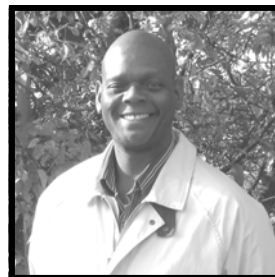
BFS Guest Vows to Never Be Homeless Again

Leslie Pridgen Achieves His Goal of Leaving the Shelter

Leslie Pridgen has left Brother Francis Shelter for a better life. His success is your success. Your gifts to BFS have provided the help to Leslie as he leaves homelessness behind. Thanks to you and the services at BFS, Leslie's success is shared by all!

Leslie stayed at BFS for nearly a year saving money, changing his diet to control his Diabetes, participating in the shelter "in-house" volunteer program, looking for paid employment and working with his case manager. "Brother Francis Shelter gave me a chance to really focus on my goals. They really helped me to improve myself because I didn't have to worry and stress about where I would lay my head at night or where I would find my next meal," Leslie explained.

Leslie came North on a bit of a whim. He was living in Florida in 2002 and an elderly friend asked him to help drive her car to Anchorage. He was at a point in his life where an adventure sounded intriguing so he agreed. He spent his first five years in Alaska



Leslie Pridgen, former Brother Francis Shelter guest.

fishing in Dutch Harbor. In 2007, he was facing homelessness due to unemployment and health issues. Due to his Type II Diabetes he was unable to finish out his last contract with his employer in Dutch Harbor.

"I am a man of Faith. I am so grateful to God that Brother Francis Shelter was available to me. You see, if you take one step God will take two and that is what you have to do to improve your life. I have walked around in the cold before dragging a suitcase behind me with no place to go. It's not a fun situation to be in. It's really pretty scary," Leslie reports.

Leslie is currently working at Hope Cottages as a Relief Individual Support Specialist. He has been there nearly a year and finds meaning in helping people who have developmental and physical disabilities. He treats

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Spirit of Denali

at Brother Francis Shelter

Friday, October 23, 2009

11:00 a.m.— 12:00 noon

Lunch

12:00 noon — 3:00 p.m.

Native Dancing

Image used with permission from Barbara Lavallee



Spirit of Denali is a celebration of Alaska Native culture through food, music and dance for the guests residing at BFS.

Please consider donating food or funds to support this event. Volunteer opportunities are still available. Please contact Ellen Krsnak at 222-7327 to find out how to help.

Winter Gear Needed

We have an urgent need for coats, hats, mittens, boots and socks in adult sizes. If you have any of these items to donate please drop them off at the shelter at 1021 East 3rd Avenue.

Thank you!



A gift of \$200 will purchase one mat & cover allowing a guest the ability to lie down to sleep rather than using a folding chair to get a night's rest.

Read more below about why these mats are needed.

Pridgen story from page 1

people with respect and considers himself a "people person" - these skills served him well during his stay at the shelter. He worked the front desk during "prime time" from 3 p.m. - 11 p.m.

"I followed the rules when I was at the shelter. Following the staff's recommendations really helped me - I was able to pay three months rent upfront when I moved into my apartment. Saving money is really important. I am saving now to make a down payment on a condo. That is my next goal; you always have to have a goal!" explained Leslie.

Leslie is self-disciplined, motivated and appreciates the importance of sticking to a plan - be it housing or health related. He has controlled his diabetes with diet (having lost 70 pounds since he was diagnosed). He credits a Diabetes Educator at Anchorage Neighborhood Health Clinic with helping him understand and

manage his disease. Leslie was encouraged by BFS staff to join Lutheran Social Services transitional housing program for single men. He lived at the transitional program for three months prior to securing the studio apartment he is currently living in.

Now that Leslie has secured stable employment and housing and has gotten his diabetes under control he plans to work on his credit record and return to school to improve his skills. "BFS was great for me - but I never plan to be a guest there again!" he exclaims.

"I have walked around in the cold before dragging a suitcase behind me with no place to go."

More Homeless Stretches Resources of Brother Francis Shelter

Every year it is challenging to meet the needs of the homeless in our community, from simply squeezing 240 people into our shelter to having enough hours in the day for staff to assist each one on their journey in recovering from homelessness. The high cost of renting an apartment and paying for utilities has been one of the major barriers for those who are experiencing homelessness. The current economic state has made this long and difficult journey even longer and more difficult for our guests.

Brother Francis Shelter is seeing the highest number of homeless since the 1990's when Alaska was still recovering from the housing bust of the 1980's. We had an increase of 17% from fiscal year 2008 in the number of guests served at BFS; in fiscal year 2009 the shelter served

3,161 men and women who came to our doors for help. The length of time a person needs our help is also increasing. In fiscal year 2009 BFS provided over 68,000 nights of shelter, an incredible 26% increase. Today's economy is a major factor in the 100 newly homeless we are seeing each month, many who are losing their housing due to extended unemployment. The current economy is contributing to the length of time shelter guests need to find a job, and housing costs continue to rise, as do utilities.

We anticipate hosting 320 people a night during the tough winter ahead. To prepare we have purchased 80 additional mats and covers at a cost of over \$10,000. These mats are specifically designed for institutions. They are heavy duty and to help reduce the spread of disease, the vinyl covering is treated with an antibacterial substance. The unanticipated cost of this purchase strains

our already stretched budget for the year. We are also anticipating needing additional staff when BFS is at capacity and we must open up Bean's Café as our annex throughout the winter months. BFS has been at our 240 capacity for much of the warm summer so we are very concerned about having the resources to provide staff and supplies to run BFS plus the Bean's Café annex for six months this year.

Your help is needed now! You can be a part of our emergency relief team. Your gift to BFS will help with the purchase of sleeping mats and ensure services for our additional guests. Your gift will help us welcome those who come to our door. Please make your gift today!

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