

Brother Francis Shelter Newsletter



A Catholic Social Services publication

December 2011

Shelter Wish List

- Coffee
- Bread
- 8 oz. Styrofoam cups
- Plastic forks, knives & spoons
- Paper plates & bowls
- Bleach
- 33 gallon trash bags
- 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

BFS Advisory Council

Martha Anagick Aarons
Pat Byrne
Kay Gajewski
Marc June
Tom Kron
Don Lederhos
Lottie Michael
Shirley Mae Springer
Staten
Chuck Szopa

Former Guest Now Guides Others to Self-Sufficiency

Paul didn't realize just how attached he would get to Brother Francis Shelter, and the staff that work here, that cold day in late January when he first arrived at our shelter. Unfortunately, Paul ran out of money to pay the rent due to unemployment and needed to take advantage of the services offered at BFS. Paul had never experienced homelessness before.

"I swear, the staff worked as hard as I did to get me back on my feet," Paul explains. Paul is currently living in permanent housing and working for BFS as a case manager. Paul has had many careers and has lived throughout the United States. He has been an aide to people with developmental disabilities, an Occupational Therapist, a factory worker, and served in the Military spending one year in Iraq. His wide variety of experiences will serve him well as a case manager.



Paul

Paul put himself through college, working at group homes for individuals with disabilities, and earned a degree in Occupational Therapy (OT). After working in the OT field for a few years he became disillusioned with the medical industry and worked for a time in a few southern factories. He was laid off from factory work when he was 31 and decided to join the Army. *continued on page 2*

"THERE, BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD, GO I" by long-time donor and BFS Advisory Council Member Don Lederhos

One day when I was at Bean's Café on business, I ran into one of our customers, a prominent lawyer in town. I had always thought of him as someone who had really done well in life, someone whose example I might want to follow. I asked him if he was volunteering, but I got an answer I did not expect. He had gotten depressed when his wife left him. He started drinking uncontrollably. He lost everything. He was now living at Brother Francis Shelter. **The saying "there but for the Grace of God go I," instantly came to mind, and it has never left.** Years later, I bought the company I was working for and my wife Karen and I started using our resources to help others. Soon afterwards, Tom Kron and Lottie Michael asked me to serve on the BFS advisory board. It has been a privilege to serve in this capacity and to meet so many of the people who generously support BFS. **Thank you!**

Your Help is Needed to Spread Christmas Joy

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 provide over 350 gifts.** These items bring a bit of joy to our brothers & sisters at the shelter during a very difficult time in their lives.

Brother Francis Shelter invites you to Christmas Eve Mass at 5:30 p.m. celebrated by Archbishop Schwietz.



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Paul was stationed at Fort Wainwright and was deployed for a year. Paul decided not to reenlist once his military commitment was up. When he was discharged he headed south to start a new life in Anchorage. Paul had saved up a little money while serving in the Army so he felt that he could afford to spend a little time decompressing from military life. He is the first to admit that he spent too much time “relaxing” and not enough time looking for work. Once he seriously started looking for work he found that it was tougher to find a job than he had anticipated. An eviction notice arrived eight months after he moved to Anchorage so he packed his few belongings and went to BFS.

Paul credits his experience in the military with adapting to crowded shelter life. He followed the program, worked with a case manager, saved 70% of his income, became an in-house volunteer, and then was hired as paid staff as a shift supervisor and now is starting a job as a case manager. Paul is excited about this new opportunity because he “enjoys helping people. You can really have an impact working one on one with people,” he explains.

“We are pleased to have Paul as an employee at BFS. He is a hard worker and has had a variety of life experiences that has given him a broad perspective. We strive to serve each and every guest at BFS individually based on their own unique background and challenges. Since Paul has walked life’s journey in so many pairs of shoes, he is a great addition to our team,” explains Dewayne Harris, BFS Program Director.

Calling the Shelter Home this Christmas

by Dewayne Harris, BFS Program Director

As the cold winter weather is upon us, the staff here at Brother Francis Shelter have prepared for the long winter ahead. One of the true bright spots in our otherwise dark and cold winter is the holiday season. Every fall you can see the holiday spirit start to bloom when the staff and shelter guests decorate the shelter and the talk is of turkey and pumpkin pie. Afterward comes the season of Advent and Christmas.

This year is certain to be a white Christmas. Staff and volunteers are preparing for one of the largest Christmas celebrations the shelter has ever had; an estimated 350 guests will fill the Brother Francis Shelter and our overflow facility next door. Christmas lights will be checked and double checked, ornaments will be sorted and organized and stories of past shelter Christmases will be told to our new

guests who will become a part of our extended family.

Each of our guests spends Christmas away from their loved ones and they share a unique sadness that only those far from friends and family understand. Staff and volunteers come together to bring the spirit and joy of the holiday season to our guests — those who have the least. As we begin to prepare the 350 Christmas stockings, we invite each of you to join us in ensuring all the guests of Brother Francis have a joyous holiday.

Your support enables us to ensure no one goes without a warm, safe place during the coldest nights of the year. Please join with us again and help us provide for our brothers and sisters who will be spending their Christmas with us at BFS. You can donate now by visiting cssalaska.org or utilize the enclosed remittance envelope.

We have two December events that I would like to invite you to. December 15th, starting at 5:00 p.m. is our annual tree-trimming gathering. On Christmas Eve we will sing Christmas carols and celebrate Mass with Archbishop Schwietz at 5:30 p.m.

During the Holidays, it is traditional to count your blessings. The supporters of BFS are at the top of my list. We simply could not continue to meet the increasing demand for services without you. Thank you for your steadfast support of our Mission!

To make an end-of-the-year donation or to purchase an honorary gift please visit cssalaska.org or contact Tricia Teasley at 222-7355 or tteasley@cssalaska.org.
Thank you!