



A Catholic Social Services Publication | Spring 2020

Brother Francis Shelter

Opening our doors to Anchorage's homeless for more than 30 years

Profound effects of small deeds

Generous donors and strong partnerships make it possible for Brother Francis Shelter to facilitate programs and support volunteers that carry out our mission. These volunteers carry out programs and provide much needed services at Brother Francis Shelter.

Debbie is one of these wonderful volunteers. Debbie has a background in healthcare and over 40 years' experience volunteering at hospices. As a volunteer at Brother Francis Shelter, Debbie spends Monday evenings at the Listening Post. The Listening Post is a local organization that is dedicated to listening to others. They listen at multiple locations around Anchorage, one of which is Brother Francis Shelter.

Recently, Debbie was asked why she volunteers at BFS with the listening post. She responded with the following story.

Every Monday evening there was one guest that Debbie always recognized. Each time she saw this guest at check in, Debbie smiled and waved. Debbie did not know anything about this individual, but each week she would smile and wave when she saw him. One Monday he came over to talk to her for the first time. He said he had mustered up enough courage to come to the Listening Post.

He explained that even though he had never spoken with her, he looks forward to each Monday night because he knows that Debbie will be there, and she will smile and wave when he is checking in. He continued, explaining that there have been times that the thought of seeing her the coming Monday has even kept him out of trouble. The guest then walked on.

This conversation has left a significant impact on Debbie and the work she does. Debbie explained, "On some nights when it's super cold in the winter, the roads are icy, or I am just tired and don't feel like coming to Brother Francis, I think about that guest and it motivates me to show up and be present. I realize that by recognizing him, it may be the only consistency in his life at this time."

These small acts of kindness and care can make a meaningful impact. Whether it's showing up to help at the shelter, donating funds, or sharing a smile with a stranger, your goodwill may be making an unimaginable impact. Debbie explained, "We never know the profound effect we may be having on someone."

To Debbie and all our supporters, thank you for your profound effect.

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PICTURE BELOW » Debbie, volunteer at Brother Francis Shelter



Collaboration for Community Health

April 2020 will mark three years since the dedication of the Medical Respite program and the remodel of the Caring Clinic at Brother Francis Shelter. These programs are made possible because of partnerships with Providence, Alaska Regional, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Southcentral foundation, the Municipality of Anchorage, and Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center, as well the ongoing generosity of donors. These programs have provided compassionate care to individuals for the last 3 years because of strong partnerships and our dedicated donors.

These enduring partnerships are the backbone to the much-needed medical care at Brother Francis Shelter.

The Medical Respite Program, a partnership with Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, has been providing respite care since April 2017. The program served 28 guests from October 2019 – December 2019. Of these guests, 18 completed the program and left with a foundation for moving forward to permanent stability.

The Caring Clinic, a partnership with Southcentral Foundation has been providing medical care since April 2017. Throughout calendar year 2019, the clinic served 1,932 customers at clinic appointments. The Caring Clinic operates on a hybrid model, providing both urgent care and primary care. The Caring Clinic serves vulnerable populations and Brother Francis Shelter residents, treating and assisting customers with their acute and chronic medical needs.

Denise Coslett, MS, PA-C, Clinical Director of the Caring Clinic spoke to the support and partnerships that went into this project as well as the importance of relationship-based care, “This clinic and the care provided is an amazing example of the community coming together to improve health and related services for individuals experiencing homelessness. The staff practices relationship-based care, and in doing so, has built trust with this vulnerable population. In turn, customers are now partnering in health-related decisions, not just for acute needs, but also to address chronic conditions, and preventative health screenings. None of this work would have been possible without Medicaid Expansion, our partnership with Catholic Social Services and many other community partners.”

Without the medical care provided at Brother Francis and the generosity of donors and partners, many men and women would have nowhere to pick up

medications, seek out basic health care, or find ongoing care for chronic conditions. CSS Executive Director Lisa Aquino expressed the importance of this type of care, “It is transformative for our clients lives to have health services not only available, but on campus at Brother Francis Shelter.”

Because of the collaboration of community organizations and local hospitals, as well as individual donor contributions, the Caring Clinic and Medical Respite Program has made a significant impact on the health and well-being of our community. Without these powerful partnerships, medical care would not be accessible to many of Anchorage’s most vulnerable. Aquino states, “Healthcare is a basic necessity. It is critical. The clinic and medical respite program offer more than basic healthcare. It is a connection to long term support. We are so grateful to have this opportunity to serve our community in this way.”

40 under 40

The Alaska Journal of Commerce announced the 2020 Top Forty Under 40 in early February. One hundred and forty-five individuals were nominated for the award and were ranked on a scaled of 1 to 5 by the Top Forty Under 40 selection committee. Included in the list was Brother Francis Shelter Director, David Rittenberg.

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PICTURE ABOVE » David Rittenberg, Brother Francis Shelter Director

» 40 under 40: Continued from page 2

There are so many wonderful things happening at Brother Francis Shelter, and David oversees all these operations. Whether it’s writing a grant, meeting with legislature, or helping guests – David does it; all with a smile on his face.

David began his career of service as a VISTA at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska. He then began his career at Catholic Social Services. His first position at CSS was as a case manager, and then program manager soon after. He was then promoted to the director of St. Francis House Food Pantry, and eventually back to Brother Francis as the current director. David is a true asset to Catholic Social Services. CSS is so proud and appreciative of David and all the outstanding work he has done over the years and in a multitude of roles.

David is grateful for all the support he’s received along the way, leading him to this recognition. “Receiving this award has given me an opportunity to reflect on those who have helped me and provided guidance along the way. I wouldn’t be the person or the professional I am today without the guidance and support of my mentors and peers. I am very proud to represent Brother Francis Shelter, Catholic Social Services, and want to thank The Alaska Journal of Commerce for this honor.”

Thank you and congratulations David!

Brother Francis Shelter: More than an Emergency Shelter

Thanks to the generosity and compassion of our many supporters and donors, BFS is a comprehensive network of programs, resources, and services; ever changing to best serve our clients. Thanks to that, Brother Francis Shelter is something different to each person who walks through our doors.

Brother Francis is an emergency shelter. However, it is so much more than that. Brother Francis is also an Urgent Care, a pharmacy, a place to find a job, and a safe space to heal. Brother Francis Shelter is a place to find warm clothes, a place to get a hot dinner, and even a place of employment for our guests.

Perhaps most unknown to supporters and community members is Brother Francis Shelter’s Housing Readiness Programs. Thanks to generous donors and our loyal supporters, we offer these programs as a path out of homelessness. The Housing Readiness Programs include Good Day Good Night Sleep and The In-House Program.

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CSS Response to COVID 19

Throughout these challenging times, CSS is unwavering in our commitment to support our community. At times like these, our community needs our support more than ever. You can learn more about how we are changing the way we serve clients here www.cssalaska.org/covid-19-response.

We will continue to adjust services based on community need as well as local and federal guidance. This website will remain up-to-date with those changes. We thank you for your ongoing support during this time.



» Brother Francis Shelter: More than an Emergency Shelter:
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Good Day Good Night Sleep is housing and support for guests with a payroll job outside of Brother Francis working to gain self-sufficiency. This program helps clients find stability when their income might not be enough to secure housing. When clients provide proof of a payroll job outside of BFS they receive an assigned bed in the dorm rooms.

**“THESE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS FILL 55
DIFFERENT POSITIONS THAT KEEP THE
SHELTER OPERATING SMOOTHLY”**

Brother Francis’ In- House Program is volunteer opportunities inside the shelter for guests. These program participants fill 55 different positions that keep the shelter operating smoothly. Positions include dinner prep and cleanup, laundry, and night time services prep, as well as many others. When guests fill these roles, they are then provided an assigned bed in the dorm rooms. Helping with tasks around the shelter provides participants with job skills and tools for long-term success.

Both Good Day Good Night Sleep and The In-House Program provide participants with a bed and space that is their own. Guests do not have to check in and out every day and night and have space to call their own. This space can give residents a much needed and well-deserved sense of consistency and ownership. These small actions are the first steps to permanent stability.

Without the generosity of donors and the ongoing support of our CSS community, these services and programs would not be possible. We are honored for the opportunity to partner with donors, volunteers, and advocates to help our clients move toward permanent stability.



Donations Wish List

- Gloves
- Face masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Hand soap
- Indoor Activities (Board games, crosswords, art supplies, etc.)
- New socks
- Personal Hygiene Items

We are not currently accepting used items. All items must be new and unopened.

To comply with the hunker down emergency order, we ask that you order these goods online and have them mailed to Brother Francis. Financial contributions are also welcomed so that we can purchase the goods needed. Thank you for your understanding!

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