



A Catholic Social Services Publication | Winter 2020

Brother Francis Shelter

Opening our doors to anchorage's homeless for more than 35 years

Housed by you

PERMANENT STABILITY FOR ROBERT AND FEFE

Sitting on your front porch with your dog, enjoying a warm cup of coffee, taking in the morning breeze - is there a better way to start your day?



PICTURE ABOVE» Robert, filled with joy on move in day at his new apartment.

For Robert, a previous patient guest a Brother Francis Medical Respite, this is how he starts most days, thanks to you.

After the stroke, Robert began his stay at the Medical Respite program with his service dog, Fefe.

While in the Medical Respite Program, Case Manager Theresa began working with Robert.

Robert told Theresa that he was ready to be permanently housed. After hearing this, Theresa and Robert got to work. Theresa started searching for an apartment for Robert and Fefe. However, this task was more difficult than originally thought out to be. Robert longed for a yard for his sweet service dog and hoped they would find the perfect place with a yard for Fefe.

IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO START YOUR DAY?

After some time of searching, they found the perfect apartment!

After move in day, Robert and Fefe quickly became good friends with their new neighbor, Gerald. Gerald also happens to have been a previous guest at Brother Francis Shelter and was housed last year.

This shared experience between Robert and Gerald has helped them develop a special connection. Now, each morning before they start their day, Robert and Gerald enjoy a cup of coffee on the porch together and take in the morning breeze.



PICTURE ABOVE» Robert and FeFe, at their new apartment.

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Focus on the frontline

IN LIGHT OF RECENT CASES AT BROTHER FRANCIS SHELTER



PICTURE ABOVE » David Rittenberg, BFS Director, serving guests at work.

Our Brother Francis Shelter family is a strong and resilient one. The BFS family is our staff, and it's our guests, and it's all of you – our donors. Beginning in March, we instituted changes across our agency, including at Brother Francis Shelter to ensure safety

Continuously through this pandemic, Brother Francis Shelter staff have been gearing up every day to come to work, taking every precaution possible and following CDC and local safety guidelines, including reducing the number of guests allowed to stay at the shelter. Staff put on their surgical masks, smocks, and gloves, dedicated to providing shelter for our guests, and keeping everyone as safe as possible.

When we first found out that one of our BFS family members, a guest at BFS, had tested positive for

Covid-19, we quickly got to work, consulting with the EOC, state, and DHSS to keep everyone at the shelter well and safe. We also updated our policies about testing regularly and staying within our shelter “bubble” as well as redesigned the layout of the building so all guests can be socially distant when they eat, increasing space between each guest. We have done this as we have worked through the recent outbreak at BFS.

As numbers increased and now as they begin to decrease, we have continually looked at our policies again with the guidance and support of the local and state health departments and the Emergency Operations Center at the Municipality. BFS staff show up every single day with passion and commitment to do the hard work of keeping people safe and on the road to self-sufficiency. We are so grateful to these true heroes, BFS staff. They continue to do all they can to keep each client safe and well as they navigate this challenging time.

We are so proud of their bravery, their dedication, and their continuous desire to

improve the lives of everyone here in Anchorage.

Thank you also to our community and supporters for your continued thoughts and prayers. So many of you have reached out to express support, and even donated food or coffee to staff. Please know these small gestures go so far. Your thoughtfulness and support are what keep us going, and serving our community and improving our community, one person at a time.

We are grateful for your continued support and prayers, especially during this trying time.

Lisa DH Aquino, MHS
Chief Executive Officer



Since March, we have moved
**347 PEOPLE INTO
 SAFE HOUSING**
 and kept
463 IN THEIR HOMES



PICTURE ABOVE » Previous Brother Francis Shelter guest taking in her new apartment on move in day.

It is a space for guests to heal, connect with nature, and learn to care for the garden. One guest, Sheila* has benefited greatly from spending time among the plants. She took an immediate interest in the garden and began to spend most of her time there.

Raeshawndra, Medical Respite Program Manager illustrates the profound effect of the garden on Sheila’s journey, “This client became very involved in our garden project. She created a sign that says Small but Mighty. She also encourages other guests to participate in the garden. I can see where she has grown from her experience with the garden.” Caring for and seeking peace within the garden has helped her and other guests with recovery and becoming more motivated in their individual paths toward permanent stability. The garden has given them a sense of responsibility in caring for something other than themselves.

Staff and guests at BFS are looking forward to harvesting the garden and the possibility of expanding it next year. Medical Respite Case Manager, Sarah explains, “The garden has been more beneficial than we ever could have imagined.” Not only has the garden helped improve guest wellbeing, it’s also provided a more relaxed and welcoming space for guests and case managers to talk and work together, helping guests open up so that staff can better serve their needs. These small projects offered to the guests bring big joy. The timing of the garden giving hope is truly a small miracle in our guests’ lives.

*Name changed for guest privacy.

Small but Mighty!

MEDICAL RESPITE GARDEN

The Medical Respite Program, funded in part by Providence Health Services, at Brother Francis Shelter (BFS) created a garden this past summer. Toward the back of the shelter, plastic planters attached to the chain link fence contain petunias, daisies and other flowers planted by guests. The summer sunshine warms the petals and releases their stimulating perfume. The garden has proven to be a space for guests at BFS to enjoy the outdoors and assist in their recovery. Many of the guests have spent time in the garden caring for the plants and have expressed to BFS staff just how much they enjoy the serenity the garden offers them.



PICTURE ABOVE » BFS Guest and Medical Respite Program Manager, Raeshawndra Jett, enjoy the garden together.

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Want to support Catholic Social Services by doing what you already do? Join AmazonSmiles today and support CSS while you shop! Amazon will then donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to a charity of your choice. All you need to do is start your shopping at smile.amazon.com and choose CCS as a beneficiary.

Every item available for purchase on www.amazon.com is also available on AmazonSmile at the same price. In-Kind donations are also accepted through Amazon. Check out the BFS Amazon Wish List online by visiting cssalaska.org

For more information about the AmazonSmile program or donating via Amazon go to smile.amazon.com/about or contact Katie Gordon at kgordon@cssalaska.org.



PICTURE ABOVE » Case Manager Heather Resz collects items for a newly housed client.

Supporter Spotlight

Terri Davis feels strongly about the power of community in overcoming homelessness. This, along with her passion to help people in need, has driven her to contribute regularly to Catholic Social Services. Her gifts have helped people at Brother Francis Shelter on the path toward permanent stability. At the shelter, staff and guests alike are family, donors play a big part in keeping the family together as they navigate the challenges of moving people out of congregate shelters and into permanent housing.

Donations Wish List

Brother Francis Shelter relies on the help of the community to support men and women experiencing homelessness. Basic needs like socks, hairbrushes, toothpaste, and other in-kind donations are vital to the success of getting people out of shelter and into housing.

This holiday season consider an in-kind donation to benefit the guests at Brother Francis Shelter.

TOWELS

SOCKS

HATS

GLOVES

Find a full list of in kind needs at www.cssalaska.org

Donations are accepted Fridays from 9am-4pm at the backside of the Main Center

Catholic Social Services
3710 E 20th Ave
Anchorage, AK 99508
907-310-7190

Contact Katie Gordon with any questions at kgordon@cssalaska.org

Thank you for supporting Brother Francis Shelter!

For more information on giving, go to cshalaska.org/donate

PROVIDING
HOPE

