



**FIREHOUSE  
MINISTRIES**

# FIREHOUSE *FORWARD*

SUMMER • 2026

## *Mission: Accomplished*

When Melvin Harris first walked through the front door of the Firehouse Shelter in 1993, he had nothing but hope. Hope for a safe room, a hot meal, and a pillow to rest his head. The shelter didn't just take care of Melvin on that cold night; it also sparked something inside of him - a will to turn his life around. Through consistent hard work and faith, he embarked upon a remarkable journey of transformation.

Over time, Melvin worked his way up the supportive Firehouse ladder. He graduated from shelter guest to program assistant, ultimately securing an apartment of his own. From there, he didn't just gain independence - he thrived. Melvin found love, built a family, and bought a home. Sobriety and faith in God worked for him. Though he never ventured far from the place that gave him that first chance.

In 1995, Melvin became a full-time Firehouse case manager and, for 31 years, gave all of his time, energy and heart to Firehouse Ministries. With a team of shelter clients, he refurbished and managed an apartment complex for shelter guests. By miraculous fate, he also grew a thriving recovery house business of his own. He built programs, taught classes, and spoke at schools and churches, spreading the word of recovery.

Becoming known as "the man with the answers", his resourcefulness, support and guidance proved invaluable to every life he touched, shelter guests and co-workers alike. He was a friend, brother, and mentor, not just a case manager. Unwittingly, Melvin became the thing legends are made of. But even legends earn and deserve their retirement.

On his last day at work, Melvin walked out the front door of Firehouse. The door that came to symbolize so much to him - hope, transformation, opportunity, purpose, friendships, service and faith. We hope Melvin won't venture too far in retirement and will return often to visit and share his wisdom, for he is beloved.

Thank you, Melvin Harris, for everything you gave to Firehouse and the men you served. Mission...accomplished.



*"Firehouse has been an amazing journey, captivating my heart, mind and soul. By God showing me favor, I became something I always wanted to be but didn't know how."*

*-Melvin Harris*

## A WORD FROM OUR *Executive Director*

There is something sacred about pausing to take stock of where you've been before looking toward where you're going. As we move through the summer of 2026, I find myself doing exactly that- and what I see fills me with deep gratitude and renewed resolve.



This has been a year of significant growth for Firehouse Ministries, not the kind measured only in numbers, but the kind that comes from asking hard questions, making courageous decisions, and staying anchored to our mission even as the landscape shifts around us.

One of the most exciting developments has been the launch of our Pathway to Purpose reentry program. For too long, men returning to our community from incarceration have faced an almost impossible gap - released with few resources and little bridge to stable housing or employment. Through case management, workforce development, and wrap-around support, we are walking alongside these men as they rebuild their lives. We believe in second chances and in the dignity of every man who walks through our doors, whether coming from the street or from a correctional facility.

We're also pressing forward on something I've been passionate about for years: expanding Firehouse Heals, our Medical Respite Program - Alabama's only program of its kind, serving men discharged from the hospital with nowhere safe to heal. That work is progressing, slowly and carefully, and it's absolutely worth it.

At the same time, our team has been deep in strategic planning, asking not just what we do but how we do it better and sustain it for the long term. That process has strengthened our team, clarified our priorities, and given us a shared roadmap ahead.

I also want to be transparent about something reshaping our field nationally. On June 1, HUD released its FY 2026 Continuum of Care funding notice - \$4.04 billion in homelessness assistance, but with sweeping changes to how it's awarded. HUD is moving away from Housing First toward greater emphasis on transitional housing, treatment, and workforce programs, and this is the most competitive CoC cycle in the program's history.

For Firehouse, this landscape is both challenging and familiar - we've never believed a roof alone is the answer, and our model has always paired housing with the wraparound support men need to truly rebuild. In many ways, where federal funding is heading is where we already are.

Through all of it, your local, unrestricted investment is what keeps us grounded and focused on the men who need us most, regardless of what shifts in Washington.

***None of this happens without you.*** Not the meals served, not the beds filled, not the men who obtain housing, employment, and hope restored. You are woven into every story of transformation that unfolds within these walls.

Thank you for standing with us, and for believing that every man experiencing homelessness deserves more than survival - he deserves a future.

With gratitude,  
Nicole

## MISSION VISION VALUES

*Firehouse Ministries provides Birmingham men experiencing homelessness a nurturing environment, supportive services, and transformative possibilities.*

### *Our Core Values:*

- Treat all guests with respect and dignity.
- Provide accessible, safe, and clean facilities.
- Nurture and care for all of our guests.
- Empower all guests to achieve their life goals.
- Recognize our ministries as part of a larger community.
- Provide opportunities for spiritual growth in faith-based community.



# Breaking Down Barriers

For the men who come through our doors at Firehouse Ministries, rebuilding a life often means untangling a web of legal problems that can feel impossible to face alone. Old debts, eviction notices, unresolved court matters, and unfinished paperwork can stand between a man and the fresh start he's working so hard to build. That's where our friends at Volunteer Lawyers of Birmingham (VLB) step in.

VLB has been a partner of Firehouse Ministries for several years, and over the past two years we've worked intentionally to deepen that relationship. What started as an occasional connection has grown into a steady, trusted resource for the gentlemen we serve. Every month VLB provides civil legal support services to men who are working hard to rebuild their lives, helping clear away the obstacles that so often stand between someone and lasting stability.

VLB's mission is simple but powerful: **everyone deserves access to justice, no matter their ability to pay.** By connecting volunteer attorneys with people who couldn't otherwise afford legal representation, VLB makes sure the legal system works for everyone, not just those with the means to navigate it alone. Over more than five years, that mission has translated into real, practical help for the men at Firehouse Ministries.

Through this partnership, our gentlemen have access to free legal assistance for a wide range of civil issues, including bankruptcy, debt collection defense, divorce, eviction, expungement, garnishment and habitability issues.

These may sound like simple legal terms, but for the men we serve, resolving even one of these issues can mean the difference between staying stuck in the past and stepping confidently into the future. A cleared record opens doors to employment. A resolved garnishment means a paycheck that actually supports a family. A handled eviction case means housing stability isn't derailed by an old mistake.

We are deeply grateful for the volunteer attorneys who give their time and expertise through VLB, and for an organization that shares our belief that everyone deserves a second chance and equal access to justice. Together, we're not just helping men survive. We're helping them rebuild.



Attorneys Tom Mostellar (left) and Doug Robertson (right), both from Bradley, frequent volunteers at the monthly clinics



VLB's Director of Programs & Engagement Megan Cheek with Firehouse's Development & Communications Coordinator Kari Todd



## Volunteer Spotlight

For nearly a decade, Doug McKinney has faithfully served the men of Firehouse Ministries, dedicating his time each week following his retirement. As a valued member of our Advisory Council, Doug leads a weekly Bible study and can also be found every Wednesday volunteering in our kitchen, helping prepare meals and serving with a smile.

When asked why he continues to volunteer, Doug shared, "I can't cook, but I love to serve. I can wash dishes, fix bread, and prep food. 'Listen, listen, love, love.' This is my motto and the motto of Kairos regarding special time. I love seeing guys come through here and move on to permanent housing. The success stories are the best."

Doug's humble spirit reminds us that making a difference doesn't require special skills, only a willing heart. Whether he's preparing food, encouraging someone through Bible study, or simply taking the time to

listen, Doug embodies the compassion and hope that define Firehouse Ministries.

Thank you, Doug, for your faithful service, your unwavering commitment, and the countless lives you have touched over the past ten years. We are truly grateful for you.

## Your Dollars Doubled!

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous foundation, this summer **every dollar you give will DOUBLE** to help your homeless neighbors - up to \$10,000!

That means a gift of \$25 becomes \$50 ... \$100 becomes \$200 ... \$500 becomes \$1,000!

As you consider your gift to Firehouse Ministries, remember it will have **twice the impact.**

For more information, contact Theresa Miller at [tmiller@firehouseshelter.com](mailto:tmiller@firehouseshelter.com) or scan the QR code to donate now.



From January - June 2026, your generous support has provided:

- 13,560 NIGHTS OF SHELTER FOR 535 GUESTS
- 33,796 SERVICES IN DAY SHELTER FOR 1,440 GUESTS
- 34,865 NUTRITIOUS MEALS FOR 1,086 GUESTS
- 4,658 HYGIENE KITS DISTRIBUTED
- 1,726 CLOTHING ITEMS DISTRIBUTED
- 2,350 CASE MANAGEMENT SESSIONS FOR 247 GUESTS
- 15 INDIVIDUALS SECURED EMPLOYMENT
- 18 INDIVIDUALS MOVED INTO PERMANENT HOUSING
- 32 INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

## SAVE THE DATE

— FIREHOUSE OF —

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## Gala

SUPPORTING



FIREHOUSE  
MINISTRIES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026  
GRAND BOHEMIAN HOTEL - 5:30 PM  
LIVE AUCTION BY JACK GRANGER

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
[TMILLER@FIREHOUSESHELTER.COM](mailto:TMILLER@FIREHOUSESHELTER.COM)  
OR VISIT [FIREHOUSESHELTER.COM](http://FIREHOUSESHELTER.COM)