

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The journey of Iwanka and her son Joseph took an unexpected turn when their vast support network quickly disappeared, leaving them alone and without a home.

Iwanka and Joseph were living with her parents, as she was serving as their caretaker. However, following the difficulty of her mother passing away, and her father being placed in hospice and also passing, she and her son then moved in with Joseph's godmother. That was when their journey began to unravel.

First, her son's godmother passed away. Then, while recovering from a difficult surgery that required multiple blood transfusions, Iwanka was informed that the house they were staying in was being sold.

With nowhere else to turn, Iwanka quickly came to realize they were now homeless. This is when they arrived at ACCESS, a place they would call home for exactly one year.

That first night at ACCESS was particularly difficult. Iwanka distinctly remembers the instant feeling of embarrassment, fear and loneliness as she walked through the shelter's doors, which were exasperated by Joseph being confused and crying out to go back to his godmother's house. However, despite all of these emotions, she quickly began to feel welcomed and valued by everyone at ACCESS, even as she was feeling low on herself at this current moment in her personal life journey.

As Iwanka got back on her feet and was ready to start a new chapter for herself and her son, she quickly began to see the opportunities that ACCESS provided her to not only find permanent housing, but to succeed. She quickly began participating in classes offered at the shelter, such as resume and interview workshops. "ACCESS gives you the tools to succeed," stated Iwanka.

However, despite gaining new skills, Iwanka and Joseph's journey remained an uphill climb. They would get exciting news that they would no longer be on a wait list for housing, but due to process delays, opportunities would slip through. The heartbreak of needing to deliver disappointing news to Joseph time and time again, and the feeling of letting him down caused her to vow to never to get his hopes up again until a new home was truly secured. "We were so close and it started to feel like it was never going to happen for us," Iwanka said.

The dream became a reality for Iwanka and Joseph in December 2022. There were going to be no more close calls and disappointing news. The two of them were finally going to have a home and were going to have an opportunity to celebrate the holidays there. Iwanka remembers believing it was all a dream until she was holding the keys to her new home and she was moving boxes inside.

Through all of the ups and downs, housing wait lists and being a resident at the shelter for exactly a year, she continued to have hope thanks to the supportive environment at ACCESS. It all paid off for her when she saw her son run into the classroom and joyfully tell his teacher, "I have a new home!"

Regarding her time at ACCESS, Iwanka exclaimed, "Everyone was welcoming and never made you feel as low as you felt inside. I couldn't have landed at a better place. I am grateful for it all. I am going to miss everyone."



Iwanka places a paper key, which she decorated on her last day at ACCESS, on the display door at the shelter. Each key represents a resident or family that has moved into permanent housing during the year.

**"ACCESS GIVES YOU THE
TOOLS TO SUCCEED"
- IWANKA, FORMER RESIDENT**

Save The Date!



Youth Impact Day
Saturday, April 29, 2023

Jackie's Corner



As we turn the page on 2022, let's first look at some of the trends we saw in services at ACCESS.

Of the 277 people served at ACCESS last year, close to half were children under the age of 18. More than 50% of adults self-reported a mental health condition upon entry to the shelter. Almost 40% had a chronic illness. These complex factors can contribute to the challenges faced by residents in moving forward. Yet, even with these barriers, 64% of residents exited to permanent housing.

ACCESS also began tracking more closely our AfterACCESS services in 2022. This includes our new volunteer outreach program to newly exited residents. This resulted in 460 units of service being delivered to previous ACCESS residents to help keep them stable and out of the shelter system.

As always, we will utilize all the data gathered over the last year to adjust our services to meet the needs of the women and children we serve in the new year.



Announcing!

Spelling Bee

COMING OCT. 14 TO THE HOUSE THREE THIRTY

We are COMPLETELY jazzed to announce that we will be hosting a unique, new event this fall: The Adult Spelling Bee!

Remember that time you were so nervous that you spelled "cemetery" with an "s" in the fifth grade? This event is your chance for redemption.

We are looking for teams of three to compete in the first Adult Spelling Bee, with all proceeds returning to the services and programming at ACCESS.

So dust off your dictionary, and find your class valedictorian on Facebook. Details will be released on our website, and social media, so stay tuned!

FRED MARTIN SUPERSTORES SHIFTS INTO GEAR TO EMPOWER THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

If you live or work in Summit County, chances are that you have either heard the name Fred Martin Superstores or have personal experience with their team. However, you may not be aware of the impact that Fred Martin Superstores has on the lives of women and children experiencing homelessness in Summit County.

As a premier partner of ACCESS, Fred Martin never hesitates to meet a need that will enrich the lives of the residents at the shelter.

"ACCESS is honored and privileged to have such a trusted partner like Fred Martin Superstores," stated Jackie Hemsworth, executive director, ACCESS. "While helping to support and empower those experiencing homelessness can be difficult due to the significant obstacles that exist, the support from everyone at Fred Martin has truly aided us in making a difference in the lives of all of our residents."

"At Fred Martin Superstore, we believe we are more than a car dealership, we are part of the community. Our families live here, our children play and grow here, and we want the best for our neighbors. We are grateful to be able to help those in need," said Ashley St. Pierre, marketing director at Fred Martin Superstore. "We are proud of the partnership that we have built with ACCESS, and we look forward to continuing to help empower women and children who are experiencing homelessness in Summit County."


In addition to being dedicated sponsors for many of ACCESS' special events, Fred Martin has also supported other aspects of the shelter. In early 2022, Fred Martin sponsored a giving campaign which aided in the purchase of a new truck to assist in the day-to-day operations of the shelter.



Fred Martin recently donated to ACCESS more than \$3,000 as part of their Test Drive for a Good Cause Campaign. Pictured are Ashley St. Pierre, Mary Williams, ACCESS' director of engagement, Cody Huff and Nick Huff.

As supporters of the mission of ACCESS, Fred Martin has provided opportunities for their customers to support the shelter through various giving initiatives. Once such initiative is the Test Drive for a Good Cause, which has supported ACCESS since 2021. Most recently in December 2022, Fred Martin donated more than \$3,000 to ACCESS as part of the campaign.

Understanding the obstacles facing many of the residents, not only with obtaining permanent housing, but also steady employment, Fred Martin has worked with ACCESS to establish a job program. Not only are residents hired through the program able to earn a livable wage and receive benefits, further empowering them on a new leg of their journey, they also have an opportunity to purchase a reliable used car, with assistance from Fred Martin. Allowing them to get to work and further down the road on their journey.



Thank You!

Thank you for continuing to support ACCESS and for ensuring the holiday season was festive and bright for our residents. Your efforts to volunteer as a Holiday Elf, to adopt one of our families or by adopting our shelter truly made a difference in the lives of women and children experiencing homelessness.

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NEW FRONTIER HOMES HELPS BUILD FUTURES

Recently, we all have been feeling the pinch in our wallets due the rising costs caused by supply chain disruptions and inflation. The impact of these rising costs are certainly felt within the housing market.

With an already scarce inventory of available affordable housing opportunities, the rising housing costs have made the hope of a new home for some experiencing homelessness seem unattainable.

However, to assist with the need for affordable housing for individuals experiencing homelessness, such as the residents of ACCESS, New Frontier Homes has established a program to help put roofs over the heads of those in need.

Tober Building Company, Family & Community Services, Community Support Services, the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) and several agencies that work closely to assist individuals experiencing homelessness have established New Frontier Homes. New Frontier Homes provides families who meet specific criteria requirements an opportunity to call a newly built, multi-bedroom house their new home.

"The partnership with New Frontier Homes has truly made a difference in the lives of many of our residents," stated Jackie Hemsworth.

"The rising cost and shortages associated with housing can often be a deflating obstacle for those experiencing homelessness. For our residents, the day they are approved for this program, you can instantly see a change in them regarding new possibilities."

"New Frontier Homes is proud to be able to help provide new homes for families experiencing homelessness," stated Karah Roby, property manager, New Frontier Homes. "Working with the team at ACCESS has truly been beneficial. They have helped us to ensure that the process is seamless and has allowed us to quickly put families in our houses so they can quickly become loving homes."

Once a family qualifies and is selected for one of the homes, they will have their utilities covered for them through AMHA, while their mortgage payment obligation would be capped at no more than 30% of their income. If a family does not have any qualifying sources of income, they could also be eligible to receive mortgage and rent payment assistance.

