

PAYING IT FORWARD

While pregnant with her first child at age 20, Monique was "couch surfing" at the homes of family and friends, with many being the homes of family members of her child's father. She began to look around and realized this wasn't the life she wanted and this certainly wasn't the situation in which she wanted to raise her child.

Wanting to begin her motherhood journey by finding permanent housing for her family, Monique discovered ACCESS. During the first night, Monique began to feel a wave of emotions.

"I felt like a bad mother. I felt that I put us, myself and my baby, in this predicament. That left me feeling sad," stated Monique.

Despite these feelings, Monique remained focused on her goal. She also attended many of the classes being offered by ACCESS, including budgeting and Home Again workshops, even though she was also working full-time during the day.

Before her son was born, Monique was able to secure permanent housing, and thanks to the fact that she completed the Home Again workshop, she was able to qualify for assistance with the security deposit and her first month's rent. In addition, Monique was able to receive a voucher for the CORE Furniture Bank to have her new home fully furnished, which helped her feel more prepared for her upcoming baby. On her first night in her new home, Monique remembers feeling proud of her success, but knew she did not want to return to her previous situation.

Since her experience touched her deeply, Monique referred individuals to ACCESS, including one of her friends that had children and was experiencing homelessness.

Then, in 2022, her journey came full circle. Now a mother of three, Monique happened to come across a job post for a child care associate at ACCESS. She was flooded with memories of how much help the child care providers at ACCESS were to her during her journey, and she felt she needed to pay it forward.

Today, Monique serves at ACCESS as the child care associate, where she not only provides the mothers at the shelter a break, but also an opportunity to take the next step in their journey by attending classes or meeting with their case manager. Monique also tries to provide comfort to the residents that she helps support by encouraging them as they continue to reach for their goals.

"ACCESS is wonderful. This is someone's home away from their new home. I have always been proud of the mission of ACCESS, which is why I was always confident to recommend ACCESS to my friends," said Monique.

When asked about the type of advice that she gives current residents following her journey, Monique added, "This isn't the end, your life won't stop here. It is only the beginning. Don't give up and take advantage of everything ACCESS has to offer. There are brighter days ahead."



Monique, a former resident at ACCESS, exemplifies the shelter's mission. She continues to succeed in her journey and currently serves as the child care associate at ACCESS.

**"THIS IS SOMEONE'S HOME AWAY FROM THEIR NEW HOME"
- MONIQUE, FORMER RESIDENT**

Purchase Your Tickets Today!



Tuesday, May 16, 2023
Access-Shelter.org/stateoftheshelter

Jackie's Corner



It's spring, and for ACCESS that also means it's time for our annual State of the Shelter Breakfast! On May 16th we will gather together with new and longtime supporters for a terrific morning. I can't wait for this year's program.

For anyone interested in learning more about both state and local issues and strategies related to homelessness, this will be an incredible slate of speakers from both the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio and our own local Continuum of Care.

The best part is that you will also get to meet our 2023 Lynn M. Budnick Empowered Woman Award winner and hear her story.

This is an uplifting morning that benefits ACCESS shelter. Each ticket or table purchased makes a difference in the life of a woman or child experiencing homelessness. I hope you can join us!

For tickets, visit www.access-shelter.org/stateoftheshelter



Support ACCESS Inc. with: DRIVE-IN TO DONATE

Present this image to your Curb Server when you order and 15% of the food and beverage sales will go back to ACCESS.



WHEN: Wednesday, May 24th
Between 5:00pm-8:00pm

WHERE: Swensons West Akron
40 S. Hawkins Ave.



Gift card and gift rate purchases don't count towards total donated sales, but purchases made with gift cards or gift rates will count toward the total.



ACCESS

Enjoy great food and entertainment as you help support women and children experiencing homelessness!

Coming Soon



McArthur's Brew House
June 16



Ignite Brewing Co.
July 18

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ACCESS OPENS BOUTIQUE TO PROMOTE RESIDENT AUTONOMY

On February 14, Valentine's Day, ACCESS opened its newest endeavor, the ACCESSories Boutique.

While ACCESS continues to provide residents with new basic clothing staples, such as pajamas, undergarments, socks, shoes and casual shirts, the boutique will further assist residents in their journey, by providing them with a sense of normalcy. In addition, ACCESSories Boutique provides them an avenue to have autonomy and to express their individualism.

"The ACCESSories Boutique is designed to give shelter residents the opportunity to have the boutique experience and to have the opportunity to 'shop' on site for new items," stated Jackie Hemsworth, executive director of ACCESS. "It is important that our residents, regardless of the fact that they are currently experiencing homelessness, have the opportunity to keep their sense of self by having the opportunity to do something that many of us take for granted, like choosing clothing and other personal items that suit their personality. The boutique gives residents the chance to feel more like themselves while working on their journey to permanent housing."

The ACCESSories Boutique was made a reality thanks to the support of Kichler



Jackie Hemsworth, executive director of ACCESS, cuts the ribbon during the grand opening of the ACCESSories Boutique on Valentine's Day

Lighting, Callahan's Carpet One Floor & Home, Vera Bradley at the Summit Mall and all of our community partners.

All items available in the boutique have been donated by local businesses in our community. To keep up with demand, each resident is eligible to receive a pass to shop once a week following scheduling and meeting with their case manager, which further assists them during their journey.

Volunteers are needed help staff the boutique on Wednesdays. If you are interested in volunteering at ACCESSories Boutique and to make an impact on women experiencing homelessness, visit access-shelter.org/volunteer.

AVERAGE NIGHT STAY REMAINS HIGH IN SUMMIT COUNTY

The barriers that contribute to a woman or mother with children walking into ACCESS are as numerous and varied as the individuals, themselves.

Regardless of the reason, odds are each of us have been late on a payment at least once due to our day-to-day activities or momentarily having a lapse in memory. In Ohio, unless it is stated differently in a lease, if a tenant is late on a rent payment even just one day, a landlord can begin the eviction process.

A large portion of our residents have experienced a legal eviction, which comes with a court record, and can prevent families from relocating to decent housing in a safe neighborhood, because many landlords screen for recent evictions. Consider, also, that a court ordered eviction cannot be expunged from an individual's record without additional court hearings. This occurrence has contributed to keeping

the average number of nights that a resident stays at ACCESS high.

In 2022, the average number of nights that a resident stayed at ACCESS was 64. That number continues to fluctuate, as of February 28 it was 97 days, and as of March 31 the number had dropped to 88 days.

While we always want our residents to move to the next leg of their journey with permanent housing, the extended time they spend here is a great opportunity for the organization to offer programs and classes that can help change their lives. Many of those are through our amazing partner organizations, such as financial literacy through the United Way of Summit and Medina, art therapy through the Art Therapy Studios, education from Fair Housing, and Legal Aid, and self-confidence presentations.

ACCESS is there for the journey, no matter how long it may take.

