

## A JOURNEY FROM ACCESS TO CONGRESS

Could you imagine a scenario where a DoorDash delivery could change your life? Or picture how that mistake could bring you from the halls of ACCESS to the halls of Congress? Well, that is exactly what happened to our former resident Breanna.

Breanna came to ACCESS as a pregnant young mother. After getting sick with COVID, Breanna was unable to work, and was evicted due to not being able to afford rent, which, unfortunately, led to losing custody of her children.

"When I lost my kids, I just felt like I was losing everything. I couldn't get a grip on anything or stop anything from happening," stated Breanna. "It felt like everything after that just spiraled out of control."

Breanna would pick up odd jobs, just to earn some money. At night, she would either sleep in her car, or on particularly cold Ohio nights, she would splurge on a night at a hotel.

"One day, I was sitting in a hotel room, and I realized that I just couldn't keep doing this," said Breanna. This was the moment that brought Breanna to ACCESS.

Breanna was very goal-driven while at the shelter. She began working at an urgent care clinic within her first week, and meeting with her children weekly while they were in foster care. She attended classes offered at the shelter, such as financial literacy and self-esteem development. Breanna also called and visited approximately 30-40 apartments and houses before she found the right one for her family.

This tenacity not only led to her being approved to rent the house that she loved and being awarded custody of her children, but it also led her to being named the 2022 Lynn M. Budnick Empowered Woman Award winner. However, the life changing moments didn't stop there for Breanna.

On the day Breanna received her award, she picked up a DoorDash delivery, and erroneously knocked on the door of the Summit County Continuum of Care (COC), who'd attended the event and heard Breanna's remarkable story. This chance encounter provided an opportunity to blossom further.

Breanna began working with the COC Youth Advisory Board, using her life experience to assist other youth experiencing homelessness in Summit County.

In 2023, a year after she left ACCESS for a permanent home, Breanna took part in a youth advocacy day in Washington, D.C. There she spoke with the offices of Senators Sherrod Brown and J.D. Vance. Breanna, who is originally from Iowa, also took it upon herself to seek out Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley, who is the current longest serving U.S. Senator.

Looking back on her journey so far, Breanna humbly noted, "I am grateful for all the support that I have received."



Breanna, a former resident at ACCESS, stands with U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) during a youth advocacy day in Washington, D.C.

**"I AM GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE SUPPORT THAT I HAVE RECEIVED."**  
- BREANNA, FORMER RESIDENT

### CALLING ALL STUDENTS!

#### Youth Volunteer Opportunities by Age:



Sign up at [access-shelter.org/volunteer](https://access-shelter.org/volunteer) today!

### Jackie's Corner



Over the past few years, the cost of housing, both apartments and houses, has steadily increased. In particular, we have seen rents shoot up approximately 17% over the last 2 years. Unfortunately, wages have not kept pace. In the Out of Reach report released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) this year, we can see that affordable housing is out of reach for many of our neighbors and friends.

There are 447,717 extremely low-income (ELI) renters in Ohio, but only 177,318 rental homes affordable and available to them, leaving a shortage of 270,399 units. Additionally, 25% of Ohioans are paying 50% or more of their income towards rent. Ideally, individuals would only spend up to 30% of their income on housing.

ACCESS continues to develop partnerships in the community with both landlords and employers that provide affordable housing options and work opportunities. Additionally, we advocate for state and federal budgets that include funds to increase affordable housing in our community.



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## ACCESS TO HOST ADULT SPELLING BEE EVENT IN THE FALL

On October 14, ACCESS will be hosting its newest fall fundraising event the Adult Spelling Bee, which will take place in the newly renovated Cabaret Room at the LeBron James Family Foundation's House Three Thirty.

The event will feature teams made up of three participants each, competing head-to-head. Teams will have an opportunity to earn mulligans, such as the Akron Honey Buzz Line, to gain an advantage over their competition in an effort to be crowned champion. This fun evening promises to be filled with humor, hijinks and spirited competition that will help impact the lives of women and children experiencing homelessness.

Kichler Lighting is the event's Queen Bee presenting sponsor. In addition, Sarah Kay, the co-host of WQMX's morning show, Scott and Sarah in the Morning, will be the event's emcee for the evening, and retired Akron Beacon Journal editor, Bruce Wings, will serve as one of the judges.

All members of interested teams must be adults, 21 and over. All team members must be registered, and the \$200 team entry fee must be paid in full prior to the competition.



On October 14, ACCESS will be hosting the inaugural Adult Spelling Bee in the Cabaret Room at House Three Thirty.

Teams will have an opportunity to crowdfund leading up to the competition, which can help to pay for the entry fee and to purchase mulligans.

There will be two seating options for interested spectators. General admission tickets are \$80 each. A table seat ticket, which allows four individuals the opportunity to relax, enjoy food and drinks, and take in the competition in style, is \$500. A table also includes a personal server. Due to venue capacity, tickets are extremely limited.

For more information on the spelling bee rules, to register a team, and to purchase tickets visit [access-shelter.org/adultspellingbee](http://access-shelter.org/adultspellingbee).

Coming Soon



Be on the lookout for more information on our holiday giving programs, such as Adopt A Family and Adopt A Shelter!

### CONTACTS

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## STATE OF THE SHELTER BREAKFAST CELEBRATES SUCCESS & EMPOWERMENT

ACCESS held its annual State of the Shelter Breakfast fundraising event on Tuesday, May 16, 2023. The event took place at Quaker Station at the University of Akron.

The event, which is the largest fundraiser of the year for ACCESS, was a morning celebration filled with an uplifting peek at what occurred at ACCESS over the past year, the impact made by community partners, and a powerful story from a former resident and winner of the prestigious Lynn M. Budnick Empowered Woman Award.

The event also included a robust discussion on ACCESS and the critical needs being faced by Ohio communities, especially the direct needs of those experiencing homelessness.

There were nearly 400 members of the Summit County community in attendance for the empowering celebration, including Akron's presumptive mayor Shammass Malik, Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro,

Summit County Clerk of Courts Sandra Kurt, Stephanie York, executive director of the Shaw JCC of Akron, and more.

ACCESS raised more than \$98,000, which will be used to support and empower women and children experiencing homelessness.

Amy M. Riegel, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), served as the keynote speaker for the event. In addition, Mar-quetta Boddie, executive director of the Summit County Continuum of Care (COC), served as a guest speaker for the event. The COC was also recognized as a community spotlight partner during the event.

The pinnacle moment of the event occurred when Latia Isler, a former resident of ACCESS, was awarded the prestigious Lynn M. Budnick Empowered Woman Award.

Be sure to mark your calendar for next year's event, which will be held on May 14, 2024.

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