



ACCESS

Celebrating 40 years of service in Summit County

Inside ACCESS

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A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY A YEAR IN THE MAKING

During the summer of 2023, a community needs assessment conducted by the Akron Community Foundation identified housing and the concern around homelessness as the number one issue in our community, a direct result of the lack of affordable housing options in Northeast Ohio.

This trend has also manifested itself at ACCESS, where following the COVID-19 pandemic, the average length of stay for residents has increased to 91 days with some residents needing up to a year before exiting to permanent housing, residents such as Kyrah.

26-years-old and pregnant with her fifth child, she found out that she was no longer able to stay with family members and had many barriers that prevented her from seeking housing on her own accord.

One-by-one her case manager helped her work through each barrier

However, after giving birth, Kyrah returned from the hospital, but ACCESS staff soon noticed a marked change in her demeanor, and she began showing signs of postpartum depression. She talked about how her children would be better off without her, and became detached from the community she had built in the shelter. Her case manager and the shelter's health and wellness coordinator counseled her to talk to a doctor.

With support and medication, Kyrah was able to return to her joyful demeanor, extremely aware of what could have happened without the staff at ACCESS.

"I am the way I am now because I had to go through this. I now realize the village that I thought I had at home was not really a village, because I had a great village at ACCESS," said Kyrah.

In her year at ACCESS, Kyrah had the space to grow, and obtained the necessary skills, through the classes and programming being offered at ACCESS, to find and move into a new home for her and her family.

"I feel like I've grown," added Kyrah. "Really transitioning to, not so much a young adulthood, but to 'adulting'. I had to go through that at ACCESS."

Today, Kyrah is successfully continuing on her journey. She is a paraprofessional at the Akron Public School's Innes Community Learning Center, and enjoying her new home with her family.



During her year at ACCESS, Kyrah built a foundation to successful complete her journey toward permanent housing. Photo: Kyrah and her family enjoy a visit from Santa at the annual ACCESS Resident Holiday party.

**"I HAD A GREAT VILLAGE OF WOMEN AT ACCESS"
- KYRAH, FORMER RESIDENT**



ACCESS 1984-2024

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access-shelter.org/access40



Jackie's Corner



Wow! 2024...A brand new year and so many things to give thanks for here at ACCESS.

It was a whirlwind of holiday events, visits from Santa, and of course the generosity of so many of you.

Even with all that this time of year asks, our community never fails to amaze me in their support of our Annual Campaign.

With the funding of the Annual Campaign, which raised more than \$71,000, ACCESS is able to begin the year from a strong financial position, ready to tackle the work of empowering women and children experiencing homelessness.

Thank you to all that have made this possible for another year!

Volunteer
at
ACCESS
ACCESS-Shelter.org/volunteer
Make a new Resolution to Help!



ACCESS CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF SERVICE IN SUMMIT COUNTY

For many, changing the calendar from 2023 to 2024 is a time for a new beginning and new opportunities, but at ACCESS 2024 is a time to celebrate. This year, we are celebrating our 40 years of service in Summit County!

"ACCESS is truly humbled and excited to be celebrating our 40th anniversary in 2024!" said Jackie Hemsworth, executive director. "From our humble beginnings in 1984 to the present day, we are honored by all of the support we have received and continue to receive. We look forward to celebrating this special milestone with everyone in the community because we have all played a part in helping to serve more than 23,000 residents on their journey toward the attainment of permanent housing. As our anniversary slogan states, "There's no place like home!"



Sister Jordan Haddad, the Rev. Harold Walker and Bishop Gilbert I. Sheldon meet on the porch of the ACCESS Inc. shelter in 1984 at 245-249 S. High St. in downtown Akron. AKRON BEACON JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

dinner, the Lotus Lounge, where residents can take a break and relax, a playroom and more.

Throughout the year, as part of our ruby anniversary celebration, ACCESS will be looking back on memories from the past, as well as discussing ACCESS' future for their next 40 years of service, on social media, as well as at 40th anniversary celebrations and events, which will be held throughout the year.

ACCESS has also established a special 40th anniversary web page. This web page will serve as a one-stop shop for the celebration, and will contain the history of ACCESS, photos and videos from our past, a calendar of upcoming anniversary events, and more.

For the most up to date information on the 40th anniversary, visit access-shelter.org/access40.

SAVE THE DATE



May 14, 2024

ACCESS' began on September 14, 1984, when the former nun convent buildings of St. Bernard's Catholic Church in downtown Akron were converted into a shelter for women and children experiencing homelessness.

The move to our current location at 230 West Market Street occurred in 1996 in order to meet the growing needs of the community. The new location increased availability in the shelter by 43%.

Today, ACCESS currently has 15 rooms for women, and women with children, who are experiencing homelessness. The shelter also includes a kitchen and dining room, where residents are served breakfast, lunch and

ACCESS RESIDENTS ENJOY THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH ANNUAL PARTY



The morning of fun didn't stop there. The residents then had a special visit from Santa and some of his friends, including the Grinch, where they received holiday gifts straight from the North Pole!

After all of the joy and smiles from seeing the great gifts Santa brought from his workshop, the resident children enjoyed holiday music and participated in holiday ornament projects, while the residents enjoyed a much-deserved pampering, as they received manicures, and participated in a paint and sip with amazing festive mocktails.

A special thank you to Lowes Home Improvement Store #0297 in Alliance for donating decorations, and some of their staff volunteered to ensure the event was a success by dressing up as the Grinch, elves and a polar bear. We would also like to thank board members Kendra McMichael, Heather Pariso, Deborah Plate and Kristen Swinehart, and all of the wonderful volunteers that helped ensure the residents had a wonderful time.

On December 10, the residents of ACCESS got into the holiday spirit during the shelter's annual resident holiday party.

The celebration began with the residents enjoying a sit-down breakfast where they were served a wonderful pancake breakfast and hot chocolate by volunteer servers.



2024 Event Sponsorship Opportunities Available

access-shelter.org/eventsponsorship

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