



# Akron Legal News

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## akron bar association



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### PHONE NUMBERS

Area code 330 unless otherwise indicated

#### Community Services

Alcoholics Anonymous  
253-8181

Battered Women's Shelter  
1-888-395-(HELP) 4357

Community Legal Aid Services  
535-4191

Fair Housing Contact Service Inc.  
376-6191

Rape Crisis Center  
1-877-906-(RAPE) 7273

Summit County Juvenile Court  
Family Resource Center  
379-3613

#### Visitors Information

Akron/Summit County  
Convention & Visitors Bureau  
374-7560  
Toll Free 1-800-245-4254

#### Transportation

Akron-Canton Regional Airport  
499-4221

Akron METRO Bus System  
762-0341

**Note:** Due to the coronavirus (covid-19), we have made the decision to split our workforce into two teams and modify our hours of operation. Support will be available through all of our normal channels. Our employees are all working towards the common goal of continuing to deliver the legal news to our clients. Our modified hours of operation are M-F 9am-1pm. We will remain in touch with any updates and wish you good health and peace of mind.

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## Freedom House for Women celebrates 15 years

SHERRY KARABIN  
Legal News Reporter

When Akron native Eva Hartwell began her journey to sobriety in 1997, she said there were not a lot of supportive services available to assist her.

"The community did not have any recovery housing, which is so important to those struggling with substance use disorders," said Hartwell. "At the time, I was working on reunifying with my children and not having housing available that provided the support I needed to successfully recover made it more difficult."

Today Hartwell is celebrating her 25th successful year in recovery. She not only has a positive relationship with her children and grandchildren, but she's also a licensed clinical chemical dependency counselor, specializing in substance use disorders.

"I'm very proud of my sons," Hartwell said. "I have one in high school and the other six all have great careers. I have a great relationship with my two daughters-in-law and my five grandchildren," said Hartwell, whose anniversary was Nov. 14.

"I can tell you I could not have done any of it without my sobriety. I would not trade my recovery for anything."

It's a success story she's been working to help others achieve for the past 15 years as the founder and chief executive officer of Freedom House for Women Inc. in Akron.

Opened in October 2007 to help Summit County women overcome the challenges of substance abuse and homelessness, the nonprofit organization provides recovery housing, behavioral health and supportive services to those seeking to stay clean and sober and lead productive lives.

"We are a certified outpatient treatment provider," said Hartwell. "We work with a lot of women with children who are facing eviction from public housing subsidized by the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority.

"We are a certified recovery housing provider through the state of Ohio and we partner with the Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board to provide funding for beds for women leaving treatment facilities and/or who are homeless.

"Our recovery housing is very structured and includes curfews and treatment requirements. We also offer life and employment skills to help the women secure jobs and housing of their own."

While the recovery housing component is only available to women, any adult in the community can access the counseling and other services the organization provides.

On Oct. 8, Hartwell marked the 15-year anniversary of Freedom House with a celebratory



**Pictured here from the left at the anniversary event are Jozette Williams (Freedom House board secretary), Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Susan Baker Ross, Bobbie Beshara (Freedom House board VP), Cuyler Costanzo (Freedom House board treasurer), Becky Ryba (Freedom House board member), Attorney Esther Thomas (Freedom House board president) and Eva Hartwell (Freedom House founder & CEO). (Photo courtesy of Eva Hartwell).**

dinner at The Church in Silver Lake.

In addition to spreading the message about the importance of recovery housing, the event was designed to raise funds to support the organization's services, including the New Journey Recovery Housing Program.

The dinner raised more than \$6,000, which will be used as matching funds with an award from Akron Community Foundation. The money will go toward capital improvements, including waterproofing the basement of the nonprofit's existing sober home.

"We are also planning to construct another recovery house on the empty lot that we purchased from the Summit County Land Bank for \$250," said Hartwell.

During the event, attendees heard from keynote speakers, Barberton Municipal Court Presiding/Administrative Judge Todd McKenney and Summit County Common Pleas Court Judge Susan Baker Ross. Both were presented with Leadership Awards for their efforts to improve the community.

Judge Ross, who has been in recovery for 33 years said she was honored to share her story.

"The theme of the event was hope, courage and change and how we can help others achieve that," said Judge Ross, who presides over the Valor Court. "I discussed my journey and the ways in which we as individuals can help to inspire others to get help.

"I was surprised to receive an award," Judge Ross said. "Prior to the event, I did not know a great deal about Freedom House. There is a huge need for recovery housing in the community and I was happy to speak at an event designed to help this organization continue that mis-

sion."

Judge McKenney discussed the important role Freedom House plays in the community.

"As a municipal court judge, I come into contact with a lot of people who have benefitted from the services Miss Eva offers," said Judge McKenney. "Freedom House only takes those who are truly committed to their recovery.

"The court has referred individuals we believe are ready to put in the work," said Judge McKenney. "They provide many supportive services, but the one that is most important is housing because without it many of these people would be left to live on the street."

In addition to the judges, one nonprofit and a number of individuals were presented with accolades during the dinner, including Akron Community Foundation (Philanthropic Award, accepted by ACF director of Community Investment Cristina Gonzalez Alcala, Ph.D.); Jennifer Moree-Brown, program director of the Akron-Urban Minority Alcoholism Drug Abuse Outreach Program Inc. (Advocacy Award); Freedom House for Women Counselor Ashley Hamrick (Outstanding Performance Award); Freedom House for Women Board Vice President Bobbie Beshara (Board Leadership and Dedication Award) and Freedom House for Women Board Secretary Jozette Williams (Board Leadership and Dedication Award).

New Journey Recovery Housing graduate Hannah Luyster received the Courage to Change Award.

Luyster, who has been clean and sober for nine months discussed the bumpy road that led her to Freedom House.

"I moved to Akron when I was nine to be closer to family after

my mom died," said Luyster. "I first started using weed at age 15 and progressed to Fentanyl.

"I went into recovery the first time around 2019 when my first child was a year old. I was not ready and left after two weeks."

She made several other attempts to get clean before embarking on her most recent journey, which led her to Freedom House in February 2022.

"My probation officer got me involved in Freedom House after I was released from Glenwood Jail," said Luyster. "I did not want to go at all, which is something that Miss Eva and I now laugh about.

"It turned out to be exactly what I needed," she said. "I stayed at the sober house, attended meetings and learned some important life skills. It was the first time I followed the rules instead of trying to figure out how to manipulate my way around them."

Luyster now has custody of her youngest child and overnight visits with her oldest.

She is looking forward to the birth of her third child in mid-December or early January and is working toward becoming a peer mentor.

"My partner and I take our kids to our 12-step meetings," said Luyster. "Being the children of two addicts, we want them to know the rooms exist. We hope they won't need the help, but in case they do we want them to know about the program that gave them their parents back and saved our lives.

"I would not be doing as well as I am now if not for Freedom House," Luyster said. "Freedom House provided the life skills and support system that got me participating in the program and that made all the difference."