

# why your donations matter

## shannon's story

Shannon McEachern entered the YWCA's Shelter Plus Care Program in July 2012. This is a permanent supportive housing program subsidized by HUD for women looking to reestablish themselves in a structured environment.

For more than four years Shannon was chronically homeless. She would bounce from state to state hopeful that a change of scenery would help her somehow. She is very open in describing her homelessness, saying she would walk down the streets and ask complete strangers for a place to stay to avoid sleeping under a bridge. She put herself in grave danger many times staying with drug dealers and living in very undesirable conditions. She would sometimes have to steal to get cash and food. In the year prior to entering the supportive housing program, she was living at times in places not meant for human habitation until she was incarcerated for a drug-related arrest.

### What changed?

Shannon accepted an offer to participate in Binghamton City Drug Court, which encouraged her to receive services at the YWCA. Since entering supportive housing she has fully utilized the in-house services of her case manager, the Vocational Educational Counselor, and the residential Director, who is a CASAC. **"The YWCA made me feel like a person,"** she said. **"It gave me the foundation and structure I needed to believe in myself. If I had to leave, I'm afraid I would relapse."**

Living at the YWCA, working with staff, and meeting other women with similar struggles has made Shannon want to give back as well as fostered her interest in advocacy. In March when she heard about the Sequester and how it would affect programs for the homeless—funding we rely on— she pushed through her feelings of anxiety and went with Carole Coppens, our executive director, and another resident, to speak to Congressman Richard Hannah about Binghamton's homeless population and how cuts to this funding would put women like her back on the streets. As a result, the Congressman was the only Republican to sign Congresswoman Gwen Moore's letter urging Congress to reverse sequestration and get back McKinney-Vinto funding.

In June of 2013, Shannon received community donations to attend the Annual National YWCA Conference in Washington D.C. She was the first resident of any YWCA to have received an invitation to attend this prestigious three-day event. At the conference, she was invited to participate in a panel discussion addressing the issue of Sequester and the Effects on Homelessness. She received high praise for her insight and attendees said she was the person who had the most impact on them at this panel. While in Washington D.C., she also spent a day on Capitol Hill visiting legislators to advocate for immigration reform.

Shannon's latest achievement is being named Tenant of the Year at the Supportive Housing Network of New York's 2013 Awards Gala in New York City. In August, she was invited to serve on our Board of Directors. She recently received her GED and was accepted at Broome Community College. She starts classes in January 2014 and hopes she can continue to stay at the YWCA while she finishes school.



Shannon and Supportive Housing Network of New York Executive Director, Ted Houghton, at the Network's 2013 Awards Gala