

PROGRAM: ACT / Project WOW / Orleans Technical College / Strictly Business

DATE RUN: November 7, 2019

SOURCE URL: <https://northeasttimes.com/2019/11/07/back-on-track-2/>

NORTHEAST TIMES NEWSWEEKLY

Back on track

Six years ago, Becky Shuhart was homeless and lived at Frankford Transportation Center. Last week, she was honored at JEVS' Strictly Business Awards for being an inspiration to others.

By **Logan Krum** - November 7, 2019



Becky Shuhart and her son Caiden, 8. Shuhart spent years of her life homeless living at the Frankford Transportation Center and riding the 14 bus every night for protection after her opioid addiction ruined her life. Shuhart now raises Caiden in their Cherry Hill home as a therapist helping others with their struggles.
LOGAN KRUM / TIMES PHOTO

Growing up in Bucks County, Becky Shuhart only ever imagined the life she lives now: a new home in Cherry Hill with her 8-year-old son, Caiden, funded by a fulfilling job helping people in need.

It was a future she dreamed of as a kid, but a future that seemed impossible as she got older and found herself homeless, living in a patch of grass at the Frankford Transportation Center for almost an entire year.

Last Friday, Shuhart recalled her story in an effort to inspire others at JEVS Human Services' Strictly Business awards, which honored Shuhart and others for overcoming formidable obstacles in their past to positively give back to their community.

"I don't feel like I'm an inspiration – I just feel like I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing," said Shuhart, 30, shortly before she was presented her award at Loews Hotel in front of her parents, Caiden, Mayor Jim Kenney and Sen. Bob Casey at the ceremony.

"If I get anything out of today I want my story to affect someone's life, and let them see if I can do it, they can do it," she said.

Doing what she's supposed to do

Even though she underwent the process of finding treatment and getting sober through JEVS Achievement Through Counseling II, Shuhart still found herself homeless and unable to take care of Caiden, who was 2 at the time and living with his grandparents. The postpartum depression after having Caiden caused her to relapse after getting clean when she gave birth to him.

"Thinking back, I don't fully understand how I survived it," Shuhart said, a note of contemplation in her voice as she recalled being homeless in Kensington for the better part of a year, a period of her life she calls "a black hole."

"Every time I got heroin I said please let this be the one that takes me out," she said.

She had a guardian angel protecting her. The driver of the 14 bus at the time would pick Shuhart up every night when she was working and let her ride through her shift, just to keep Shuhart off the streets.

"She said, I'm helping you, but you're also helping me because you make me feel safe," Shuhart recalled. "She was an angel in disguise."

Shuhart eventually found lodging in a basement of a "slum landlord's" apartment in Wausau ("No one should have ever been living there," she said) and found a job working at Dunkin' Donuts for \$7 an hour. From there, she has only continued climbing the ladder upward. She now works as a mobile psychiatric rehabilitation worker, helping chronically and severely mentally ill adults transitioning into independent living. Most of her clients are dual diagnosed with substance abuse disorder.

"It's a very hard job but when I go home at night I feel like I've made a difference," she said.

This May she closed on her Cherry Hill home, taking Caiden back into her care. Before the ceremony began Caiden squirmed in the chair next to her, wearing a tucked-in shirt and tie, before running off to see his grandparents.

And for Shuhart, where she's at right now is home.

"I just want to keep finding my way," she said. "Obviously there's still more to my story, I'm only 30 years old. I'm sure there are bigger and better things in my future, I'm just not sure what they are right now."

Turning the tassel

Shuhart was recognized alongside Leanne Kilmecke, Tasheed Carr and Isiah McCloud, the latter of whom is from Lawncrest. Last year, [McCloud was named the recipient](#) of a full-ride scholarship to Orleans Technical College after

graduating from Project WOW, a program that helps high school dropouts obtain their GEDs while transitioning into a career in trades.



Isiah McCloud of Lawncrest dropped out of school at a young age, but got his career back on track through JEVS. Since graduating in May, McCloud has been working in the field with the goal of one day starting his own business. LOGAN KRUM / TIMES PHOTO

McCloud has made good use of his time since. He completed the carpentry program at Orleans in May, and since then has worked as a roofing laborer and plumber.

“Being honored today makes me realize my success,” he said.

McCloud was an A+ student in middle school, but dropped out of high school as a freshman after his frequent bad behavior made his mom miss work. He’s been working in the trades with his dad since he was a kid, and knew he would never be an “office type.”

“Without me being so bad at school, I don’t think I would be here,” he said with a laugh.

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McCloud plans to continue his education while working in the field, with a possible goal of one day opening his own handyman business.