

Pathways to Independence
P.O. Box 43
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**Pathways**
TO INDEPENDENCE™

Education, Healthcare, Therapy and
Mentoring for Young Women in Need

Spring 2016

Pathways to Independence

P.O. Box 43, Los Alamitos, CA 90720
562.493.9048

www.pathwaystoIndependence.org

Through your donations to Pathways, our clients learn independence, and futures are changed for the better. Thank you for your consideration in contributing to Pathways.

Since its inception in 1991, over 300 young women have participated in the Pathways to Independence program. Pathways is appreciative of its personal, corporate and service organization sponsors, as well as the health care providers who donate their services without charge to improve the quality of life of Pathways clients.

For more information about Pathways to Independence, please call 562.493.9048

The Joy of Mentoring

Each young woman in the Pathways program has the faithful support of a mentor who champions her to her highest possibility. We have over 40 men and women currently volunteering as mentors. Being a mentor requires listening, guiding and a genuine desire to be a positive force in the life of another. The reward is heartfelt joy!

Interested? Contact Patsi Wagner at patsiwagner@earthlink.net

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 Pathways Graduate

Pathways Graduates Two Special Young Women

Written by Current
Pathways Client Desiree
B. Haley

Another successful night for Pathways as four new girls are introduced to the program, two girls graduate, a number of girls are recognized for character awards, and more are honored for earning GPAs of 3.5 and above. Great milestones were shared. Shane Schmidt and Mike Evans are recognized for their tremendous support and volunteer work on all of the girls' cars, and an "Unsung Hero" award was given to Tony Acevedo.

Most of us know Tony's son, Jason Acevedo. As his son steps away to do work out of state, Tony has graciously taken over as our go-to IT guy and on

January 22nd, we honored Mr. Acevedo for all of his hard work.

Dave continues our celebration with a correlation between Pathways and Alcoholics Anonymous. He explains several parallels between A.A. and the Pathways program. Over the course of time, Pathways girls get to experience the impact of a large group effort similar to that of A.A. Through this group effort, coupled with commitments, the girls are able to experience a gradual transformation from low self-esteem to confidence, similar to members of A.A., as a result of gratitude and acceptance.

Pathways graduate, Melanie, has not only demonstrated a great amount of gratitude, but has also showed us the importance of self-acceptance. Having come to appreciate her own beauty and talent, as well as



how deserving of love she is, Mel earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Creative Writing for Entertainment with an emphasis in Screen Writing from California State University, Fullerton. Mel's mother never could have imagined Mel where she is today. In fact, Mel's mother has only

said she loved her once and it was when she was 32 years old. But regardless Mel has managed to remain sober for four years and is very active in A.A. and the Lynn House. She is an educated and confident member of society. She is hilarious and an asset to many. She is a Pathways graduate.



Gina addressed us as an artist, a writer, a poet, a musician, and a dreamer. But not before she went through two detoxes, two rehabs, three overdoses, a hospitalization, a mental ward, and a homeless shelter. Gina got the opportunity to participate in two study abroad programs in

Europe while a student in the Pathways program. She is seven and a half years sober and has a Fine Arts degree from California State University, Fullerton. Although she barely finished the 10th grade, she graduated college with a 3.85 GPA; Magna Cum Laude.

Dave ended the night with a quote from The Big Book, "The greatest revolution in our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitude of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives." Gina and Mel are both superb living examples of that quote. Congratulations to the graduates!



Dave thanks Mike and Shane

Where are They Now?

Pathways Alumni: Margie Maya, formerly Margie Moran

In 2005, Margie Maya found herself working two jobs and attempting to transfer from a community college to a four-year university. During one of her shifts at an Orange County Mexican food restaurant, she met co-worker Angelica Ruvalcaba who recommended that she apply for Pathways. A few years prior, Margie lost her younger sister in a tragic accident, and after many years of repressing her grief, the financial stresses coupled with college were causing this trauma to come to the surface. With few resources and little knowledge, unhealthy coping mechanisms gave her relief from her emotional pain. Life was headed in a downward trajectory. Pathways was a gift from above sent at the perfect time.

During her time in Pathways, Margie developed a close relationship with her therapist and mentor Claire Mann. With Claire's professional expertise, Margie was able to work through her grief and guilt and learned to develop healthy tools to process the hard things in life. She also turned her grief into a deep desire to work in healthcare. Her life experiences had given her the desire to help others who were sick and experiencing trauma as she had earlier in life. Margie graduated in June of 2008 with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of California, Irvine.

The original plan was to earn a degree in sociology and minor in biology and apply to medical school. Her grades in science classes, however, were lower than expected, so she dropped the biology minor and plans to apply to medical school. That all changed when she started working at a cancer diagnostics lab where she realized that, in fact, she did have an aptitude for science. In retrospect, it's easy to explain how it took some time after college to work towards her original dreams in healthcare. Her story is common: "I was the first member of my family to attend college, which meant that I had no idea what I was doing and received little support. Everyday was a struggle to wake up, to make ends meet, and to attend my classes. No matter how badly I wanted to succeed in school, the physical exhaustion and emotional stress combined to create an intellectual environment that limited what I could do in the classroom." Pathways gave her the support she needed and because of that she was able to graduate with her bachelor's degree. What Pathways gave to Margie didn't end when she graduated college. She learned life long tools to become a successful person in the world. Today Margie is a Registered Nurse in a leading, nationally distinguished academic medical center in New Jersey.

"I'm a different person today than I was then. I'm no longer that young girl struggling to survive and create a better life for my family and myself. I'm a new person living out the goals I had set for myself so long ago. I took my losses in life, and all that Pathways has invested in me and am paying it forward in the care and support I give my patients today. I could have never imagined this would be my life today during that period before Pathways."



Written by Pathways Graduate Johanna Lohrmann

Addicted. Abandoned. Child of a broken home. Hopeless. Depressed. Sexually abused. Living in fear. Lost. Grieved. Orphan. Rejected. Alone.

Angry. Worthless. These are powerful titles with disturbing implications. My childhood and teenage years had been marked by each of these in one way or another. Though marked by these past titles, I am not defined by them today. I made a decision long ago to cast off these titles and to walk humbly and boldly with one title, "a new creation."

I am no stranger to adverse and painful experiences. As a child, my family struggled in multiple ways. From financial issues to substance abuse, my parents lived in what seemed like constant chaos. My mom gave birth to me at the young age of 21; I was her third and last child. My Dad battled a substance addiction most of my childhood and experienced instability in jobs because of it. By the age of 18, I had moved over 20 times.

Although life ebbed and flowed through a sea of chaos and instability, the most memorable years of pain happened between ages 13 and 17, my personal "dark ages." Over the course of 4 years, I abandoned my personal faith in God, fell victim to sexual abuse, watched my parents' divorce after a painful affair, and lost my mother to an unexpected and untimely death. At just 39, my mom's life was cut short by a seizure after surviving an accident that left her paralyzed.

At the young age of 17 I had experienced enough pain to last a lifetime. By this point, I had fallen into my own addiction battling alcoholism and drug use. When my mom passed away, I had a realization that I too was slowly dying, both emotionally and spiritually. My life had slipped into a dark place of hopelessness. If change didn't come, I would be lost forever.

I began to look for answers in everyday life. I began a deep search of my soul and my heart. "What was I here for?" "What did I have to offer the world?" It would take years before I found answers. I believe each person has a similar internal desire stowed away in their hearts. We all long to feel a sense of purpose and to know what we were created for. In each of us lives a desire to be transformed, renewed, and free.

The definition of metamorphosis is "a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one, by natural or supernatural means." Much like a caterpillar who has an internal desire to change through metamorphosis, I found myself desperate for a new nature. In 2007, at the age of 21, I received a life changing opportunity to continue my process of healing. I was accepted into Pathways to Independence and began going to recovery meetings, a local church, counseling, and meeting with a mentor and life coach. Over several years, I allowed myself to



A MESSAGE FROM DAVID BISHOP, PATHWAYS FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

If you are in receipt of this newsletter, you are among the 2400 people who support Pathways to Independence through their financial resources and/or their professional occupations. Because Pathways has been blessed with such incredible generosity, we have been able to admit 331 young women over the past 25 years. To date, no one has ever been paid to manage our program. Instead, we have divided the administrative responsibilities among our board members and other volunteers. We currently have 54 young women in our program. As we continue to grow, the management responsibilities have become more and more extensive and complex. As a result, I recommended our board hire a part-time executive director. The executive director will work with the current board and me. While this is a change from the past, I am not stepping down but am looking forward to transferring some of my responsibilities. I can assure you my wholehearted commitment to Pathways will continue.

For application information regarding the Executive Director position please refer to the Pathways website www.pathwaystoindpendence.org

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATES 25 YEARS 1990-2015

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become vulnerable and open to the process of change.

There were many days that the process of healing felt overwhelming, almost claustrophobic, like a cocoon. It was difficult to see where the road ahead was going and painful to stay the course. However, I couldn't resist my need for healing and transformation. Slowly, the process began to yield results. In 2010, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. After graduating, I began working with other women, men, and families whose lives had been devastated by circumstances much like my own.

One of the greatest changes I have seen is my capacity to receive and give love. At some point in the process, the stony, hard parts of my heart were chipped away and renewed. I felt alive again without the help of drugs, alcohol, or unhealthy relationships.

Over the last 6 years I have had the privilege of walking through incredibly difficult times with other people who are hurting and broken. I have held positions as a Case Manager in a rehab-transitional living facility and have also had the honor or training and equipping young leaders on a college campus as a Resident Director and Program Coordinator. I have a passion to see people walk into freedom and to know their purpose and calling in life.

Today, I celebrate 9 years of sobriety. I have also been married to my best friend for 4 years. I am the proud mother of a handsome and joyous little boy who is almost 2 years old, and I am currently expecting a little girl due in March 2016. Together, with my husband, we are missionaries with Church Resource Ministries. Specifically, my husband works with musicians all over the country who have fallen into

patterns of hopelessness, addiction, and other concerns. I am taking a sabbatical from work but plan to return to a part-time role where I assist refugees who need access to resources and spiritual care.

The road to recover from my past hurts and wounds was difficult. It's a path that is narrow and hard to walk, and not many want to stay on it. But today, after making the unbelievable journey, I can say with all honesty that it is more than worth it. The easy path in life produces little. The journey from becoming a caterpillar to a butterfly requires perseverance, honesty, pain, and strength. But it is the most rewarding and life-giving process imaginable. Change is possible.

Today, my wings have grown quite large. I am soaring in a freedom that comes from the truth that I was created with purpose by a loving God who knows me intimately and desires to use all of my life for His good purposes. I am no longer weary of my past because my past doesn't define me; it makes me a better person. I wouldn't be the woman I am today if it wasn't for all of the things I had to overcome.

Daughter. Wife. Mother. Best friend. Helper. Strong. Filled with Joy. Renewed. Free. Filled with hope. More than a conqueror. A new creation. These are titles I proudly wear today. Titles I am honored to be called by.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17