



There is a quote about perseverance that perfectly sums up the experience of a Pathways client from the first interview until graduation day.

*“Never stop fighting until you arrive at your destined place-that is, the unique you. Have an aim in life, continuously acquire knowledge, work hard, and have perseverance to realize the great life.” - A.P.J. Abdul Kalam*

There is an air of excitement and accomplishment at all the Pathways to Independence graduations and this graduation held up to that expectation. The theme for this celebration was Perseverance and it began with the Executive Director of Pathways, Goretty Ramos, accentuating what perseverance is. Perseverance is the continued effort to achieve something despite difficulties or opposition. It is holding steadfast to achieve your goals.

On this night we celebrate the achievements of three exceptional women. Samantha F., Thalia S., and Marlita W.. These women have been through the obstacle course that guides us from bridge to shore, finally reaching a destination. For all the clients of Pathways in attendance, it is the culmination of years of hard work, which seemingly has no end. It is proof that we can do anything we put our hearts into and that there is light on the horizon.

The graduation celebration always begins with dinner and camaraderie. In the busy life of a Pathways client it is a time to connect with friends, meet some new ones, and for the veteran clients it is a time to extend a hand and let the new women know that we are not alone on this journey. This celebration is not just for the graduates. It is also about recognition of persistence in education and the ability to maintain a substantial grade point average while balancing the demands of life.

The first clients to be recognized are those who have been able to maintain a GPA of 3.5 and higher because this is the type of hard work that should not go unnoticed. This semester there were many women able to achieve this goal. Lisa Fluke acknowledged the following clients for their achievements: Claudia (3.5), Lauren S (3.58), Roxanne (3.66), Javanna (3.67), Julie (3.67), Christina (3.73), Samantha F. (3.77), Stephanie (4.0,) Jessica (4.0,) Maggie (4.0,) Heather (4.0), Chelsea (4.0), Vanessa S (4.0) and Marlita (4.0).

There is more to being a Pathways client than grades. With the demanding schedules and lifestyles of these women, it is

important to also recognize the achievement of personal growth and perseverance in character. Character is the attitude carried with you in all your daily activities and challenges. The Character Award is given by the Mentors who help guide each Pathways client through all the expectations and challenges that are presented to them. The award is a message of endearment, letting the recipient know that her diligence has not gone unnoticed. The Character Award was presented by Pathways President Patsi Wagner who always expresses how proud she is to present this award to these women, reading to the audience the messages sent by their mentors. The semester's award recipients were Stephanie M, Sarah N, Alyssa G, Megan C, Roxanne D, Samantha S, Chelsea N, Julie G, Lauren S, Elizabeth F, Michelle B, Savannah C, and Maggie B.

The last important award to be presented is the Unsung Hero Award. Goretty explained that the Unsung Hero is a volunteer for the program who unassumingly helps to uphold the mission of Pathways by donating some portion of their lives to the women of Pathways to Independence. On this night, the donation comes in the form of financial guidance. All of Pathways thanks this semester's Unsung Hero, Jodi Okun. Thank you, Jodi for all you do.

Finally, we arrive at the culmination of the evening! This is a time for the graduates to shine.



# Thank you to the following Foundations & Funds in 2017

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The first graduate to speak was Samantha F. Samantha shared how she has waited 9 graduations for this moment and expressed that Pathways has been a part of a total transformation of her life. Samantha has graduated with Honors from Cal State University Fullerton with a Bachelor of Science in Human Services and an emphasis in Mental Health. She was given the distinction of election to the Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society. Samantha plans to continue her education to receive a Masters Degree. Samantha thanked her providers, her mentor Lisa, Friends of Pathways and her therapist, Ed, whom she thanked for “loving me through the pain.” Samantha closed with an inspiring message of hope to new clients of Pathways: “Give yourself time to adjust; you absolutely deserve this.”

Thalia S. was next to deliver a very emotional message of hope and transformation. “Pathways has reconstructed me into the woman I am today,” she acknowledged. She also touched on how therapy has brought her self-esteem and validity, and an acceptance of love from others. Thalia graduated from Cal State University Fullerton with a Bachelors Degree in Health Science and is looking forward to a future in Radiology and Missionary work. Thalia also thanked her providers and her Mentor



Debbie, who gives her hope. Thalia’s advice to her fellow Pathways clients was to “Be honest with yourself. Take advantage of this opportunity.” Thalia closed with a heartfelt message to Dave Bishop, the Founder of Pathways to Independence. “Thank you, Dave! You is Kind, You is Smart, You is Important,” to quote a dialog from The Help by Kathryn Stokett.

Our last graduate of the evening was Marlita W. who began with the sentiment “I never thought I would be up here! This is surreal.” Marlita spoke fondly of being introduced to



Pathways through a friend and fellow client, emphasizing, “Everything happens for a reason.” Marlita graduated from Cal State Dominguez Hills with a Bachelor of Science with an emphasis in Community Health. Marlita’s accomplishments include the Honors List and Deans List. She is proud of her role as Co-Creator of the ‘Plant Powered Toros’ Organization. She assured her audience that she remains constant and is looking forward to her opportunity to give back to Pathways. In her closing, Marlita also expressed a tearful appreciation to the founder of Pathways. “Dave has given us such a gift, because one person believed in himself, and believed in us.”

Pathways to Independence is a gift, not just for the graduates, but for every fortunate person whose life is touched. I would like to close with one more quote to sum up the evening, and the experience of accomplishment and perseverance that is Pathways to Independence.

“The path from dreams to success does exist. May you have the vision to find it, the courage to get on to it, and the perseverance to follow it.” -Kalpana Chawla





# Grateful

## Thanks to our New Corporate Partner UPS Volunteer Event

A great BIG Thank You to UPS. A crew of UPS volunteers painted the fences at the Pathways apartment building making it a beautiful living environment for our many residents. On behalf of our board of directors and clients, thank you UPS for the gift of time and service!



*Thank You!*



Thank you to UPS Foundation for the generous \$10,000 grant!

*Ron Murrey CFO, Lisa Mais Fund Developer, Bruce DD Mac Rae UPS Vice President, State Government Affairs, Western Region and Goretty Ramos Executive Director*

## Our Pathways apartment building has been paid off! We now own it free and clear!

A Huge Thank You to all the donors who contributed. The building was originally purchased in 2011 for \$1.8 million with the McMillen Foundation and the Bickerstaff Family Foundation providing the majority of the funds. This year, Jean and Jerry Green made our dream of being mortgage free a reality with their Matching Gift. In addition, we would like to thank Keaton Ministries, Amy and Wade Brandenberger and The Burton G Bettingen Corporation for their considerable donations. With the assistance of our matching gift donors, the funds that were designated for the mortgage payments can now be used for client support. We are so grateful!





P.O. Box 43,  
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*Pathways Graduates*

## The Joy of VOLUNTEERING

We are presently looking for providers in the following areas: optometrists, dentists and orthodontists. If you are interested or know someone who might be able to assist our Pathways clients in these areas, please contact Lori San Fillippo at [lorirobin311@aol.com](mailto:lorirobin311@aol.com)

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 350 young women have participated in the 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 info call 562-493-9048



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