

## Pathways 2018 graduates praise program, look forward to the future.

After graduating from Golden West College in May, Alex P. has big plans. She's getting married this summer and starting nursing school in the fall. They are milestones the 2018 Pathways graduate never envisioned before she joined the program.

At the Pathways graduation celebration in June, Alex recounted the details of her traumatic childhood. As a teenager, she turned to drugs and alcohol to try to numb the pain. It was a lifestyle that led to multiple arrests and ultimately landed Alex in a homeless shelter. After getting sober at 21, Alex received a referral to Pathways to Independence, but like so many of the program's participants she wasn't sure initially it would be a good fit.

"I just felt like an empty shell of a human. I didn't think I was smart. I didn't think I could do school," Alex said. "Pathways made me feel worthy for the first time in my life. All I needed was love, support, and encouragement. Then I gave it everything I had."

Alex's determination paid off. While obtaining her Associates' Degree, Alex earned a 3.8 GPA, made the honors list, and received her EMT certification. Her long-term goal is to become a registered nurse and work in labor and delivery.

Alex was one of six young women to graduate from Pathways in 2018. While the women's histories varied, all six had faced daunting challenges in their lives.

Sarah N., who endured years of physical and emotional abuse by her mother, contracted a rare disease, transverse myelitis, at the age of 11 that left her confined to a wheelchair. Sarah hoped college would offer a reprieve from the abuse she suffered at home, but after being raped repeatedly in her college dorm, she contemplated taking her life.

"Had it not been for Pathways, I probably wouldn't be here," Sarah told the audience as she fought back tears. "Thank you for opening your homes and your hearts to make me the woman I am today."

That woman is now a graduate of Cal State Dominguez Hills with a Bachelor's Degree in history. Going forward, Sarah plans to seek a Master's Degree in library and archival sciences in preparation for a career as a museum curator or archivist.

**"Being in Pathways is like going on a really long road trip. There will be pot holes and speed bumps along the way, but if you persevere and refuse to give up, you'll reach your destination."**

*Sarah N., 2018 Pathways graduate*

The next graduate to speak was Jennifer L. After losing her mother to cancer as a young girl, Jennifer sought to drown her grief and depression with alcohol. She described coming to Pathways at 27 with a "broken heart."

"Like so many girls in this program, I didn't think I deserved to be here," Jennifer recounted. "The people in Pathways empowered me. Now my payback is to pay it forward."

After receiving her degree in sociology from Cal State University Long Beach, Jennifer plans to pay it forward by pursuing a teaching career focusing on bringing a health-related curriculum into trade school settings.



A teaching career is also the goal for another 2018 Pathways graduate, Briana A. Growing up as the oldest child in a home with a drug addicted father who was frequently in jail and a mother who struggled with alcoholism, Briana explained she became the de facto “parent” to both her mother and father and her siblings. Art served as Briana’s creative outlet and an escape from the “chaos” at home. After graduating from Cal State Fullerton with a Bachelor’s Degree in studio art and completing a stint as a student teacher, Briana plans to attend graduate school with a focus on art therapy.

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The opportunity to draw upon their experiences to help others was an aspiration shared by many of this year’s Pathways graduates. Michelle B., who just received her Bachelor’s Degree in social work from Cal State Long Beach, hopes to become a licensed clinical social worker and start her own private practice specializing in trauma therapy.

As a girl, Michelle was repeatedly sexually molested and raped by her father, who was ultimately convicted of felony child sex abuse. The trauma left Michelle feeling completely powerless. She quit attending school and developed an addiction to alcohol and drugs.

At the June graduation ceremony, Michelle tearfully thanked Pathways for being there for her. “Honestly, the people who have our histories should be in jail or dead. The fact I’m standing here tonight is truly a miracle. You gave us a chance when there were no others.”

Like Michelle, Pathways graduate Emily T. was also sexually abused as a child. In addition, she was bullied at school, compounding her feelings of worthlessness and self-loathing. Emily told attendees at the graduation that she began drinking to dull the pain and her weight plummeted at one point to just 90 pounds. At 19, Emily embraced sobriety and subsequently applied to Pathways.

“This program has given me so many tools and life skills,” Emily said. “Pathways gave me the ability to do the things I was previously terrified to do. The person standing before you tonight is nothing like the person who started with Pathways.”

Emily received her Bachelor’s Degree in hospitality management from Cal Poly Pomona, graduating magna cum laude and making the dean’s list. She is looking forward to a career in the hospitality industry and aspires to a role in management.

Emily and fellow graduate Michelle were among the 17 Pathways clients recognized during the ceremony for academic excellence this school term, earning a GPA of 3.5 or better. The other honorees were - Alyssa G. (3.75 GPA); Danielle T. (3.60 GPA); Serena V. (4.00 Term GPA); Roxanne D. (3.58 GPA); Javanna J. (4.00 GPA); Sierra F. (3.53 GPA); Vanessa S. (4.00 GPA); Christina C. (3.65 GPA); Megan S. (4.00 GPA); Jessica C. (4.00 GPA); Charity F. (4.00 GPA); Chelsea N. (4.00 GPA); Maggie B. (3.76 GPA); Stephanie M. (4.00 GPA) and Heather B. (4.00 GPA).

In addition to acknowledging clients’ academic achievements, Pathways’ Executive Director Goretty Ramos announced the recipients of this year’s Character Awards. Nominated by their mentors, this award recognizes Pathways clients who have exhibited significant personal growth and “character” during the past year. This year’s Character Award recipients include - Cristina S.; Jessica C.; Danielle T.; Lauren S.; Jill L.; Meagan B.; Heather B.; Elizabeth O.; Meghan B.; Cheyenne M.; and Jennifer L.

As always, the graduation ceremony was a bittersweet occasion, marked by heartfelt and often heart-wrenching speeches, hearty applause, hugs, and a liberal sprinkling of tears, shed by graduates and members of the audience alike.

Perhaps 2018 graduate Jennifer L. summed it up best when she observed that, for Pathways clients, “the dream keeps changing and it keeps getting bigger.” The same could be said for Pathways itself, which has been helping its young clients realize their dreams for more than a quarter of a century.



I just graduated from Cal State Fullerton with my Bachelors in Studio Art. I am tremendously grateful for Pathways giving me the opportunity to receive an education, and to graduate with no debt. One of the things that I am most grateful for from Pathways is my mentor. I've never had someone available who genuinely cares for me. She is there for me through my ups and downs.



I grew up in an emotionally and physically abusive household. My parents offered neither emotional support nor positive interest in my future. The older I became, the more I lost interest in my future as well. I turned to drugs and alcohol and began hanging out with older friends who introduced me to heroin at 16 years old. Almost immediately, I was hooked. I began stealing to support my habit and eventually turned to prostitution when stealing was no longer enough. I continued this cycle of self-destruction and abuse from men until the age of 21.

After years in and out of 12-step programs, I finally got sober. However, I had no family support, and with no education, I struggled financially. I was working over 50 hours a week just to pay my bills. I just wasn't able to cut my hours in order to attend college. Around 3 years sober, I was blessed with the opportunity to be accepted into Pathways to Independence. I wanted to start a new chapter in my life and take action for a better future, and I finally had the tools and support necessary to achieve my goals.

Seeing a therapist through Pathways helped me to start believing in myself: that I deserved to be successful, that I was capable of earning a degree. My mentor has been my biggest cheerleader, and I am able to see a psychiatrist for help with my medications. I am currently preparing to transfer to a 4-year university as a Chemical Engineering major, and I am forever grateful for the help Pathways has given me.



My experience with Pathways has absolutely changed my life.

It amazes me that I am about to leave the program where I have achieved so much. I have become a strong, resilient, and beautiful woman. When I entered the program, I felt that the most important part of Pathways was getting the education I could not afford. Even though I am about to be credentialed as a health teacher and truly believe in the power of education, I realize now that my education was not the most important part of my journey. The most significant accomplishment I've experienced is healing. Therapy and mentorship have changed me for the better. I was able to walk through my grief and my recovery with the help of so many strong, beautiful women. It is with gratitude I say that, although it has been painful, I have been able to heal and transform through this program. There is so much gratitude to express, but most of all I want to thank Pathways supporters, volunteers and providers for the life I never thought I could have. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



Go confidently  
in the direction  
of your dreams.  
Live the life you  
have imagined.

*Henry David Thoreau*





FRIENDS OF PATHWAYS PRESENTS

THE  
BIG  
EASY  
*and all that*  
Jazz  
IN THE PARK

*Get a twiggle on!*

We're going to 1920's New Orleans for the 22nd Annual Friends of Pathways Street Party, "The Big Easy and All That Jazz in the Park" on Saturday, October 6th.

Featuring our famous silent and live auctions, savory delights from over 30 local restaurants, libations & dancing to the jumpin' beat of the Allison August Band, we'll have a swell time benefiting Pathways to Independence.

Think New Orleans jazz, think the Roaring 20's, think lots of swanky items to bid on! Shimmy on over for an evening that promises to be the cat's meow, raising money to help Pathways to Independence transform the lives of existing clients and add more young women to the roster!

If you can't make it, we would still love your support of this worthwhile cause.  
There are many ways to help out:

**ATTEND  
THE EVENT**

purchase tickets at  
[www.pathwaystoindpendence.org](http://www.pathwaystoindpendence.org)

**SPONSOR  
OUR EVENT**

Starting at \$500, includes event tickets  
& recognition contact Lisa Mais  
at [lisa.mais@pathwaystoindpendence.org](mailto:lisa.mais@pathwaystoindpendence.org)

**DONATE  
FUN STUFF**

to feature in our Silent or Live Auction -  
contact Maribel Mullery  
at [mullery417@gmail.com](mailto:mullery417@gmail.com)

**PURCHASE  
OPPORTUNITY**

**TICKETS:**

3 for \$25; 12 for \$100

Contact Robin Jenks at [rdjj@yahoo.com](mailto:rdjj@yahoo.com)  
Winners need not be present to win!



**GRAND PRIZE  
DREAM VACATION!**

Enjoy \$3,500 toward a vacation destination of your choosing.  
*(arrangements made through our local travel agent)*

**2ND PRIZE**

\$1,000 Gift Certificate to Terranea Resort

**3RD PRIZE**

\$500 Cash

If you would like to purchase opportunity tickets, donate an auction item, or become a sponsor, just let us know. You can always send a check made out to "Friends of Pathways" to: 3152 Blume Dr. Los Alamitos CA 90720

We hope to see you at The Big Easy and All That Jazz in the Park and are grateful for your continued support of Pathways to Independence!

# SPONSORSHIP FORM



## ■ DIAMOND \$20,000

### *Benefits include:*

- 20 GUESTS FOR PRE-EVENT VIP SPEAKEASY PARTY
- 20 TICKETS TO EVENT WITH VIP CHECK-IN
- 2 PREMIER TABLES OF 10, 1 TABLE SERVER
- 4 BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE
- and more!*

## ■ RUBY \$10,000

### *Benefits include:*

- 10 GUESTS FOR PRE-EVENT VIP SPEAKEASY PARTY
- 10 TICKETS TO EVENT WITH VIP CHECK-IN
- 1 PREMIER TABLE OF 10, 2 BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE
- and more!*

## ■ PLATINUM \$7,500

### *Benefits include:*

- 10 GUESTS FOR PRE-EVENT VIP SPEAKEASY PARTY
- 10 TICKETS TO EVENT WITH VIP CHECK-IN
- PRIORITY CHECKOUT
- and more!*

## ■ GOLD \$5,000

### *Benefits include:*

- 8 GUESTS FOR PRE-EVENT VIP SPEAKEASY PARTY
- 8 TICKETS TO EVENT WITH VIP CHECK-IN
- 3/4 PAGE AD IN EVENT PROGRAM
- and more!*

## ■ SILVER \$2,500

### *Benefits include:*

- 6 TICKETS TO EVENT
- 1/2 PAGE AD IN EVENT PROGRAM (5.5"W X 4.25"H)
- and more!*

## ■ BRONZE \$1,000

### *Benefits include:*

- 4 TICKETS TO EVENT
- BUSINESS CARD SIZE AD IN EVENT PROGRAM (2.75" X 4.25")
- RECOGNITION IN PROGRAM AND SIGNAGE AT EVENT

## ■ COPPER \$500

- 2 TICKETS TO EVENT
- RECOGNITION IN PROGRAM AND SIGNAGE AT EVENT

## CORPORATE, BUSINESS OR INDIVIDUAL: *(Please Print)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Day): \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Business \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Sorry, I am unable to attend. Please accept my donation in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**DEADLINE:** All checks and graphics must be received by September 15th in order to be recognized in the program.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

#### **Please mail this form & a check to:**

Lisa Mais, Fund developer  
3152 Blume Dr. Los Alamitos, CA, 90720  
lisa.mais@pathwaystoindpendence.org

#### **For more info about program ads call/email:**

Lori Giacomini  
562.673.2832  
lorigiacominiathome@gmail.com

Federal Tax Id # 33-0148082

### How would you like your name or business name to be displayed on signage at the event?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Options on submitting info/graphics for program:

- ☐ I've mailed a hard copy of the graphics to be scanned to Lori Giacomini, 12392 Ballantine Drive, Los Alamitos CA 90720
- ☐ I've emailed the graphics to lorigiacominiathome@gmail.com. Any graphics sent should be in .jpg format and will be sized according to donation amount.
- ☐ Please use the below information to create an ad for me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Where are they now?

We truly appreciate the wonderful group of clients with whom we have been privileged to work with the past 27 years. They have worked hard, confronted their pasts, transformed their lives and become women of purpose. We are proud of all of our clients, their accomplishments and their desire and ability to pay it all forward. Read about one of our graduates and where she is now...

Lin had learned at a very young age that her life at home looked and felt different from the rest of her classmates, friends and even extended family members. She learned early on that if she told anyone what was happening at home, the adults in her life, whom she loved, would get in big trouble. For years, life on the outside was to look starkly different than it did behind closed doors and she planned to keep it this way forever. There didn't seem to be any other options, and this was simply how her family carried on. And in many ways, she came to begin to believe that the abuse she experienced at the hands of adult men in her life was simply part of her ethnic culture, a cultural norm, just as she had come to believe that nothing was going to change, no one was coming to help, and she deserved it. She suffered from untreated depression and anxiety, fighting suicidal thoughts and a deep sense of self-loathing and internalized rage. She had to keep quiet.

Keep it together.

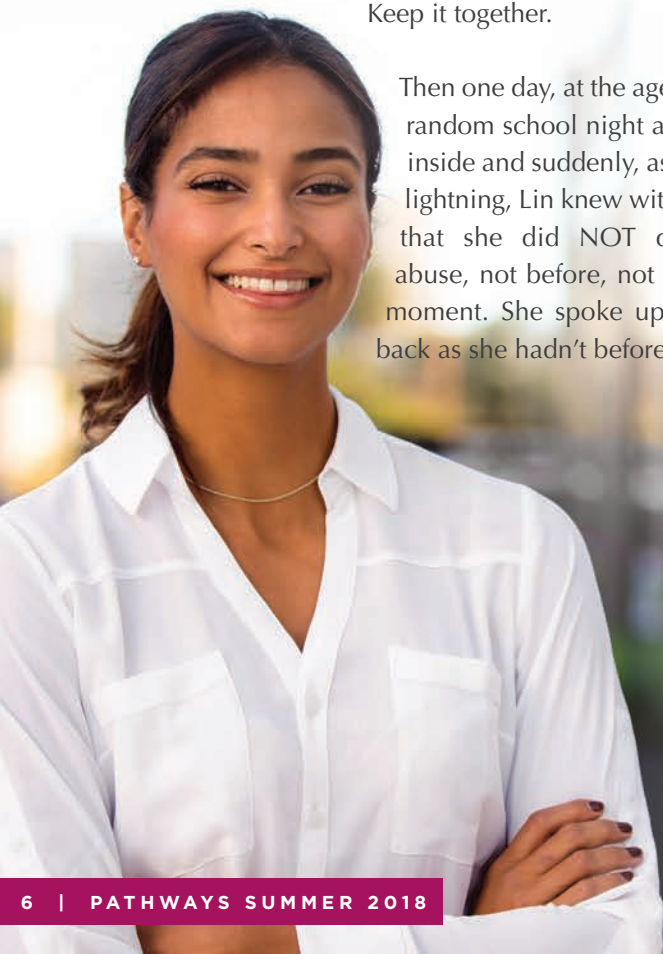
Then one day, at the age of 19, on a random school night a fire burned inside and suddenly, as if struck by lightning, Lin knew with full clarity that she did NOT deserve the abuse, not before, not then in that moment. She spoke up and spoke back as she hadn't before.

**I AM PROFOUNDLY AND  
FOREVER GRATEFUL  
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And in that scary moment she grew courage. She knew she had also risked greater danger. Consequently, Lin was threatened for her audacity to defend herself. She could see the hate and the rage in his eyes as he threatened, "Watch your back, watch your back, I'm coming after you." And thereafter, privileges like the car, the roof over her head, funds to cover her college tuition, and her general safety were all at risk. She knew then that she could lose everything at any moment. Nothing really

was her own. It was then that Lin shared her fears and her experiences with her two best friends. One of them said, "I think you should call my cousin, Tiffany and ask her about this scholarship program she recently got in."

The phone call to Tiffany, a current Pathways client at the time, then turned into a phone call to Dave Bishop, which turned into an interview. Little did Lin know just how her life would change after that call. In 2005, Lin was accepted into Pathways to Independence as a sophomore college student. An immediate priority was to get her out of her home. Pathways gave Lin the assistance and courage to move out and away. She was also provided a vehicle, one she could call her own, and a mechanic to keep her car in good repair. She was also placed into therapy for the first time in her life. And provided access to numerous top-notch service providers including a medical doctor, dentist, orthodontist, chiropractor, muscle specialist, and on and on. Pathways to Independence stepped in as a surrogate parent and gave Lin all the tools and resources necessary to succeed and more significantly, Pathways to Independence provided the safe and unconditionally loving space to begin the emotional and whole-being healing that Lin deeply desired. With Pathways, Lin had the opportunity to work intensively and extensively on her trauma, repressed anger, grief and emotional pain and begin developing new and healthier skills to cope. With the help of her professional therapist, Sharon Dickson and her mentor, Dave Bishop, the self-loathing began to develop into a deep self-love and sense of self-worth. And without Pathways "forcing" Lin out of the unhealthy, toxic environment her family was living in, there



(Where are they now? continued)

would never have been room for the reflection, reconciliation, and healing among her immediate family members that followed soon after Pathways took Lin under its wings.

Lin graduated with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Business Administration from California State University, Long Beach in December 2007 with concentrations in Finance and Human Resources Management. Today, Lin is doing what she loves and applying her degree and her Pathways experience as Director of Human Resources for a 150+ employee insurance defense law firm in Downtown Long Beach. Lin is Board Secretary and has served as a Member and Officer of the Pathways to Independence Board of Directors since 2008.

"There are still no words and no amount of time I could ever give back to repay Pathways to Independence for the life it has given me today. All of its volunteers and service providers together have changed the course of my life incredibly. And truly, the GREATEST AND ULTIMATE GIFT was that Pathways to Independence and all of its angels loved me until I learned how to love myself. I am profoundly and forever grateful to Pathways . . . you saved my life in more ways than I could have dreamed."

## *The Joy of Volunteering*

We are presently looking for providers in the following areas:

optometrists, dentists, orthodontists, gynecologists, licensed therapists & mentors.

If you are interested or know someone who might be able to assist our pathways clients in these areas, Please contact

Goretty Ramos at  
gorettyramos7@gmail.com

## Co-dependency 101 — Client Retreat

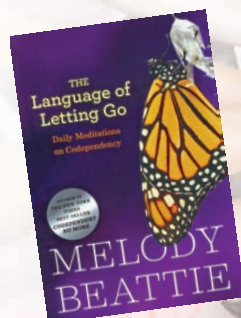
Pathways participants are required to attend a one- day, annual retreat, designed to help them deal with issues arising from troubled, chaotic, or abusive backgrounds. St. Claire's Garden is a beautiful and serene setting for reflection and self-evaluation. This year's theme was titled "Co-dependency 101 – from Victim to Victorious."

Sharon Dickson and Nikki Harris, our therapist coordinators, guided the clients as they worked through often difficult and painful past experiences with constructive openness. Nikki notes that "they laughed, they cried, they grew. They supported each other."

Among topics explored were responsibility and accountability. Healing and a sense of unity were among the many positive outcomes.

Each girl was given a copy of *The Language of Letting Go* by Melody Beattie. The gift was received with enthusiasm. Most came away from their day of retreat with heartfelt



gratitude for the impact on their lives. One client concluded, "We learned about different co-dependency patterns and talked about boundaries. It helped put me back on a path to becoming victorious in my life, rather than continuing to feel like a victim."



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**BOARD MEMBERS**

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*Pathways Graduates* 



Another great event and month from Patti Blake and her **Blue Moon Boutique**, as she hosted an event on June 7th and donated \$2,500 from a portion of June sales to Pathways to Independence. Patti has always been a big supporter of non-profits in the local community and, since opening her doors 6 years ago, she has donated over \$160,000 to many charities!



Thank you to the **Eileen Fisher Foundation** and the sales teams at the stores in South Coast Plaza, and the Robertson location in L.A. The teams at both locations did a fabulous job to organize the event, complete with a fashion show at the South Coast Plaza location raising \$2,600 for Pathways to Independence. It was a delightful day for all.



A Big Thank you to Trojan & Co. Accounting Corporation and Fagan and Fagan LLP for assisting our clients with their taxes this year.

