

# Pathways TO INDEPENDENCE™

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

## Congrats to Our Graduates



Civil rights activist and writer  
Maya Angelou once stated that

*“we delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”*

In January of 2023, Pathways to Independence gathered for its traditional celebration of incoming and graduating clients.

*By Jessica, current Pathways' client*

Three clients celebrated the completion of their undergraduate degrees with the encouragement and affection of other young women soon to follow in their footsteps. Five new clients were welcomed in the community to start or even continue their journey with a team of mentors, directors, and friends to cheer them on over the years. As Pathways expands to receive more young women, the clients continue evolving into powerful, intelligent, independent women of a bright future.

After clients and volunteer staff worked together to strategically set up the dining space, they introduced themselves to new neighbors and rejoiced with the return of alumna clients from recent years. Mentors and directors joined the women for dinner and reflected on the adventures made with Pathways guiding and providing for their wellbeing and success. Outside, the horizon bloomed pink and gold as the sunset hour initiated the long-awaited ceremony.



Program Director, Eydie Pasicel and Executive Director, Diana Hill opened the stage to celebrate everyone's accomplishments, from reaching milestone years of sobriety to achieving childhood dreams. Everyone's ambitions were celebrated with fervor and passion, creating an environment of safety and community as clients were presented, one-by-one, to share their proudest moments of 2022. Clients with high GPAs were then welcomed to the stage in recognition of their academic prowess and resilience. Many of these clients were able to reach the recognition of Dean's and/or President's List at their

respective schools, despite personal challenges and were presented with a small monetary gift as a reward for their hard work.

Similar to Maya Angelou, self-published author and photographer Rupri Kaur said, “you do not just wake up and become the butterfly. Growth is a process.” The highlight of the ceremony rang true to this statement as the Pathways graduates and their mentors reminisced on their journeys together. Between healing from past traumas and even struggling through the healing process, the graduates shared how Pathways helped them change their lives for the better. As a final message, they encouraged current clients to advocate for themselves and to never give up on themselves.

Mia graduated with a BA in Economics and a Minor in Political Science from California State University. With her education, she’ll strive to raise others out of poverty, paying forward the kindness and generosity that Pathways gave her.

Katie graduated with a BA in Psychology from California State University, Fullerton. As she dedicates her career to helping others, she plans on returning one day to Pathways to offer her services to future clients.

Aubrey celebrated completing her associate degree with emphases on math and science at Cypress College. Moving forward, her journey includes a goal of completing a degree in Nursing and supporting others on a similar path.

The evening was a conclusion of an ongoing story, and just the beginning for other narratives. For many, it was a reminder that Pathways clients are the authors of their own success, and they’re never alone in the writing process.



**MIA**

**BA IN ECONOMICS WITH A  
MINOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE  
FROM CALIFORNIA STATE  
UNIVERSITY**



**KATIE**

**BA IN PSYCHOLOGY FROM  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY,  
FULLERTON**



**AUBREY**

**ASSOCIATE DEGREE WITH EM-  
PHASES ON MATH AND SCI-  
ENCE AT CYPRESS COLLEGE**

## *Spring is right around the corner..*

**AND OUR CLIENTS ARE IN FULL SWING, ENGAGED IN THE NEW SEMESTER.**

I have now been in this position for a year, and as I tell my husband almost daily – I love my Job. I'm blessed with the most fantastic board, staff, volunteers, and of course, our clients that inspire me each day.

Here is a quick look back on some of the accomplishments of 2022 and where we are headed in 2023.

Our clients are always first and foremost in our minds and actions. We accepted 12 new young women in 2022, which has been a joy. We screened approximately 20 applications, and all that qualified were invited to a program overview presented by Program Director, Eydie Pasicel. At this meeting, clients were presented with an overview of our program, its parameters, and its commitments. If applicants were still interested, they were interviewed by the Executive Director (myself) and our Program Director. They then undergo a mental health evaluation by our volunteer therapist directors, Sharon Dickson and Nikki Harris. Next our volunteer Education Director, Lisa Fluke assessed their academics and current progress in school. The last stage of this process was the team meeting where the team reaches consensus with a recommendation for the applicant to be accepted either as an active or provisional (6-month trial) client, or if not accepted, we try to provide a path back for reconsideration.

Pathways has established a new

practice of partnering with other organizations to enhance and support our programs. A few of the partnerships that began in 2022 were, Golden West College and LBCC EOPS Advisory Boards, Assistance League® Huntington Beach, National Charity League, Champions of Ability, JFCS, Windows Between Worlds, and Food Finders. Please refer to our website ([www.pathwaystoindependence.org](http://www.pathwaystoindependence.org)) for a complete list.

More community opportunities are planned for the coming year.

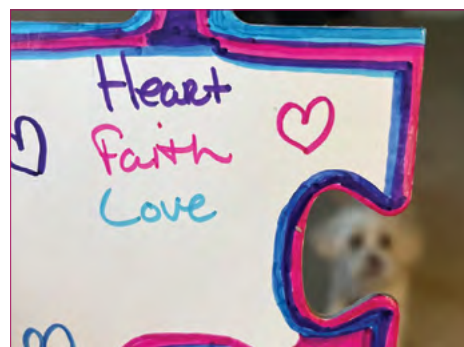
Even with all that was achieved in 2022, the board, staff, and volunteers are ready to do more. Here are a sampling of activities we are working on for 2023.

New clients enter the program three times a year (Spring, Fall, and Summer – aligning with the academic calendar). In the spirit of community and an effort to welcome our new clients as Pathways co-harts, we have instituted a new tradition, a new client welcome dinner. Our staff will be providing a warm and welcoming dinner in our student lounge, in addition to some fun activities to help break the ice and make them feel at home in their new surroundings.

Pathways will also be welcoming additional staff. We've been blessed with a grant from the James Eaton Foundation to provide a part-time



**ASSISTANCE LEAGUE HUNTINGTON BEACH  
HOLIDAY DONATION OF FOOD GIFT CARDS**



**WINDOWS BETWEEN WORLDS WORKSHOPS**



**CLIENT PREPARING FOOD FINDERS PRODUCE**

staff therapist/coordinator. This new position will allow us to conduct group sessions, follow up on clients' attendance with their therapists, and conduct specialty workshops, just to name a few of his/her duties. We have also applied for a grant to provide our clients with a part-time education counselor.



WE HAVE RE-ESTABLISHED IN-PERSON GATHERINGS THIS PAST YEAR. A FEW OF THE EVENTS OUR CLIENTS ENJOYED WERE GRADUATION CELEBRATIONS, QUARTERLY BIRTHDAY BASHES, A WINTER WELLNESS EVENT, AND MENTOR AND CLIENT SUMMER GATHERINGS.



MENTORS GATHERED AT WINTER WELLNESS EVENT



GRADUATION CELEBRATION

The Pathways board, staff, and mentors will take part in the second half of a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Training on March 18th. The first session proved to be an excellent opportunity for all involved, and I am confident that the conclusion will prove to be just as poignant. The board will also embark on a strategic planning process this year and we are excited to collaborate on

this new exercise resulting in a road map for our future.

We have a strong group of supporters called “Friends of Pathways” (FOP) who have sustained Pathways for the past 27 years. This year we are developing a new sustainer group “Young Philanthropists of Pathways” (YPP). YPP will have the opportunity to lead the change they want to see in the world by helping to usher Pathways into its next chapter.

Pathways is a Social Impact Organization who needs support to continue doing this powerful work. Pathways transforms lives – by providing our clients support and a solid framework. These amazing young women work hard each and every day to absorb all that is offered to them.

If you would like to join the team, we have many volunteer opportunities – You can find a link to a volunteer application on our website ([www.pathwaystoindependence.org](http://www.pathwaystoindependence.org)), and we will find the right place for you.

We look forward to sharing more good news throughout 2023 – The Future is Bright.

Love and Light, Diana



## MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

### *Message from Board Chair, Raymond Cervantez*

Happy New Year! 2022 was an amazing year for Pathways to Independence and I know that 2023 is going to be even better. January came, and the Board of Directors hit the ground running. We had the opportunity to attend the first part of a 2-day training session on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We look forward to gathering with our Pathways Staff and volunteers, for our second day of training in March. After that, the Board will begin working on creating a strategic plan for the organization. This plan will focus on identifying the direction of the organization and prioritizing key areas of opportunities. As the Board has gathered, we have engaged in thoughtful conversation, identifying resources that can assist in further executing our mission and growing our organization, while being fiscally responsible to our stakeholders.

On behalf of the board, I want to thank every person that serves as an ambassador for our dynamite organization. It is because of you that our message is getting out and we are able to find additional resources for our clients. We have Board Members, Staff, Mentors, Directors, and volunteers out in our communities, advocating for our clients. THANK YOU! A year ago, our Executive Director, Diana Hill, challenged us all to serve Pathways to Independence by being “United in Mission”. It is amazing what we can accomplish when the Board, Staff, and Volunteers are marching in the same direction.

As we take on the challenges that 2023 may throw at us, let's remind ourselves of Diana's motto of being “United in Mission” and remember that no challenge is too big for us when we are working together.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

# *Pathways' Alumna, Desiree, Shares her Journey to Becoming a Published Author*

I graduated high school in 2006 and I graduated college in 2016. Yes, it took me ten years! I spent the first five years convinced I could put myself through college while living in my car, working odd jobs, and washing my hair in the bathroom sink at school. I jumped from one toxic relationship to another. I believed any man who said he loved me, and I put myself in sordid situations to make ends meet.



### **FINDING SAFETY IN THE PATHWAYS FAMILY (AND THE PATHWAYS HOUSING):**

I spent the next five years in what I consider to be my first safe home, the Dunbar apartments. With tremendous love and support, I studied hard, attended weekly therapy, as well as meetings and workshops. I learned to value myself and my future, and it is because of those five years that I have a future today.

I even have a beautiful smile thanks to the Pathways dentists, periodontists and orthodontists who worked on my teeth while in the program. Following the extraction of all four of my wisdom teeth, I got braces and a permanent retainer during my time as a Pathways client. I had a lifetime of absent dental work all crammed into five years, so I could graduate with a perfect smile. I didn't have to look down at the floor when I gave my graduation speech.

I left the program with an AA in Communications from Orange Coast College, an AS in Human and Behavioral Development from Golden West College and a BA in Print Journalism from Cal State Fullerton. I published several articles during my time as an editor on The Daily Titan. I also had a few pieces published in Tuft Magazine.

### **CHECK OUT DESIREE'S WORK ON AMAZON:**

Since college, I have worked on several endeavors, but I am most proud of a book series that I became involved

in, as a Junior Editor, along with some other Pathways affiliates. It's been about six years in the making now but has finally launched. A story of a heroine, who was dealt a poor hand, led down a dead-end path, but then stumbled upon a program that changed her life for the better. Sound familiar? It is called *The Perfect Revenge*. It is a five-book saga. Book one and two have already been released and are available on Amazon; the third installment is on the way. I've also written my own book that I have yet to publish, but I do hope to one day gain the courage [and support] to share that story.

I recently completed a certification program at UCSD for copy editing. I reside in sunny San Diego with my husband and our two-year-old son. We bought our first home in 2020. My son goes to a private preschool where he gets the best education offered to toddlers, because I believe education is the one thing no one can ever take away from you. I have referred a dear friend to Pathways, and she is a current client. I remain very close to my mentor, Diana Hill. My son knows her as Aunt Diana.

### **PAYING IT FORWARD:**

I wrote in my application essay to Pathways that I knew I would graduate college; it would just take me longer without that help. I think about that little girl who didn't have a clue, and now that I understand what it takes to put a person through college, I know without a doubt there is no way I would have any sort of degree today without the help of Pathways and its donors. I have already started a college savings for my son. My husband and I hope to one day expand the Pathways program and start a branch down in San Diego, because we really need one everywhere.

*We at Pathways wish Desiree continued success & happiness.*



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Mentoring for Young Women in Need

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.....  
Diana Hill – *Executive Director*

## 27TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISER SAVE THE DATE

**SATURDAY  
OCT 7, 2023**



**WE HAVE  
EXCITING NEWS ...**

**WE ARE HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE  
THAT WE ARE MOVING TO  
A NEW LOCATION!**

**DETAILS WILL FOLLOW**



Young  
Philanthropist  
OF PATHWAYS



Join other Young  
Philanthropists  
like yourself  
in supporting  
the mission  
of Pathways.

*come join us!*

**April 25<sup>th</sup>  
5:30-7:30PM**

The Boathouse on the Bay  
190 N Marina Dr,  
Long Beach, CA 90803

*Hosted Appetizers & Wine*



Become a founding member where you will build  
social and business relationships while also supporting  
the young women of Pathways to Independence.

For more info visit [PathwaystoIndependence.org](https://PathwaystoIndependence.org)

RSVP to [cynthia.gillis@pathwaystoIndependence.org](mailto:cynthia.gillis@pathwaystoIndependence.org) by Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>