

## *“All you need is twenty seconds of confidence.”*

“All you need is twenty seconds of confidence.” Businesswoman and photographer Jennifer Garcia presented at Pathways to Independence’s Fall 2023 celebration to share her wisdom with the Pathways clients, revealing a space of vulnerability and community. Sharing her previous moments of both courage and fear, she encouraged each woman to find their source of confidence and no longer fear the “no” that comes before the life-altering “yes.”

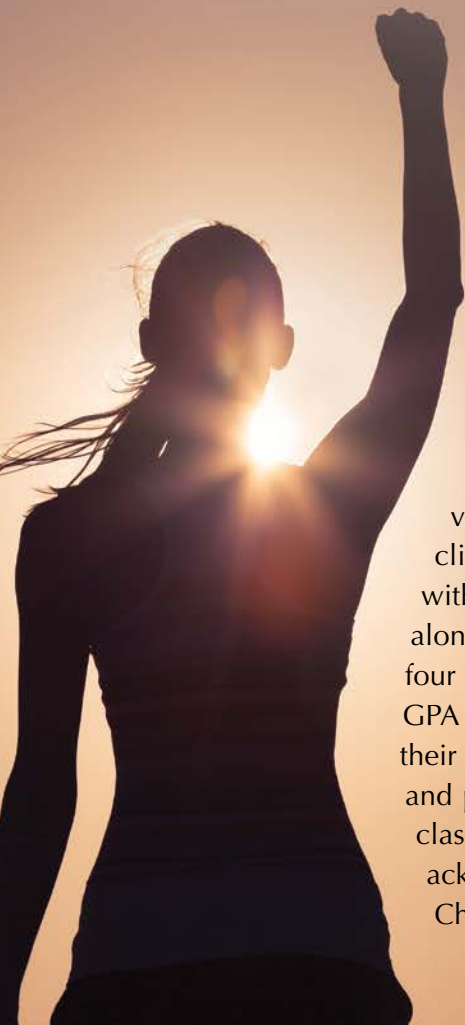
Although Pathways did not have any graduates this fall, every client was commemorated and praised for their progress moving closer to their own graduation ceremonies. Following the tradition, the Pathways community gathered to celebrate their accomplishments and goals for the upcoming 2024 year, engaging in conversations and activities that further strengthened the bonds shared between clients, volunteers, and staff. Two clients were recognized with the 4.0 GPA Award, along with an additional four clients with the 3.5 GPA Award, highlighting their academic growth and prosperity for the fall classes. Five clients were acknowledged with a Character Award by

their mentors, praised for their endless resilience and determination to finish their education and pursue their dream careers.

To further nurture the clients’ growth and independence, Executive Director Diana Hill revealed the Pathways Re-Commitment Plan and the Participation Incentive Rewards Program. The Re-Commitment Plan is the promise by the client to communicate with their support team, achieve their personal goals, graduate from the program, and love themselves as individuals worthy of compassion. After every client pledged to follow these agreements, the staff and volunteers formed the “Tunnel of Love” to cheer them on as they turned in the signed contracts. The Participation Incentive Rewards Program is a voluntary program where clients can record healthy habits, self-care and wellness, and contributions to the community. With every section they fill out and submit, they earn ten or twenty points that can be saved for amazing prizes. This allows each client to tailor their rewards to their interests and integrate beneficial practices into their everyday lives.

Aligning with Jennifer Garcia’s message at the fall celebration, beloved Barbadian singer, actress, and businesswoman Rihanna has encouraged her followers to nurture their self-confidence and self-love: “The minute you learn to love yourself you won’t want to be anyone else.” The Pathways staff and volunteers have demonstrated their presence and support by helping every client receive compassion, resources, and opportunities to build their confidence and pursue the dreams they are well on their way to achieve.

**“THE MINUTE YOU  
LEARN TO LOVE  
YOURSELF YOU  
WON’T WANT TO BE  
ANYONE ELSE.”**



## *Pathways' Alum, Grateful for the benefits of the program, shares her inspiring success story.*



Sarah has recently moved out of state to assume a new position as financial aid advisor for the University of Texas, San Antonio.

After about 5 years in Pathways, I graduated in 2018 with a degree in History at CSUDH. I continued my education at SJSU, graduating in the top 3% of my class with a master's in library science and information technology. While working on that degree, I began teaching as a long-term substitute in the Westminster School District.

During Covid I had the opportunity to join Albrazar, a non-profit organization, where I served as Program Manager and lead instructor. I managed programs helping at-risk youth in after-school programs, working with the school district to ensure compliance and satisfaction of state inspections.

During my time with the non-profit, I served on advisory boards and research committees, assisting community members to access mental health services and county programs such as Calworks, Calfresh, and OCVote. After nearly 6 years of service there, I relocated to assume the position of financial aid officer at the UTSA, (University of Texas at San Antonio,) where I currently work, helping students apply for financial aid and scholarships.

I am very excited about the opportunities here in Texas and look forward to becoming involved in new volunteer endeavors. I'm particularly interested in helping the veterans as well as those at-risk in the community. I hope to obtain a PhD in Public Administration and work in higher education or the non-profit sector.

While in Pathways, I loved the various opportunities and workshops offered to help us grow. Pathways gave me a stable foundation to rely upon to navigate life. I was so fortunate to be a part of a program that cared so much about me. From the mental health services we received, to the help in getting a roof over my head, I was so blessed that it allowed me to grow into the woman I am today. Pathways always made me feel like a valued person enjoying the support of the "guardian angels" (volunteers) who work tirelessly to get every single woman through the program. I am so thankful that I always had someone looking out for me and my best interests. My time in Pathways has impacted me in ways I could never explain.



With Pathways, I was able to replace my rickety old wheelchair with a reliable, new wheelchair that helped me live an independent life, navigating from class to class, free of worries. I had the opportunity to attend therapy multiple times per week to ensure that I received the help I needed to get through the day and week. The car maintenance provided by Pathways enabled me to get everywhere safely.

Pathways is a program like no other. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to have been a client of Pathways.





## *Significant Growth Over the Past Year*

I am delighted to share exciting news about the significant growth Pathways has experienced over the past year. With the addition of two pivotal roles – Therapist Director and Academic Success Coach – our clients have flourished. Additionally, our active client base has grown to 36 individuals (in 2023 we welcomed 14 new clients).

In 2024, our primary focus is on fostering connections. Whether it's with our clients, community, partners, or donors, we recognize that this engagement is fundamental to our success. We are committed to nurturing these relationships as we progress toward our shared goals.

In 2024, Pathways will build on the foundation of the work done in 2023. Here are a few of the Highlights from 2023.

### **ALUMNI SURVEY**

In 2023, we embarked on our inaugural alumni survey, marking a significant milestone for us. The experience proved to be both enlightening and motivating. It was truly heartening to learn about the diverse paths our former clients have forged in careers, families, and hobbies.

The survey also highlighted areas where PTI can enhance its services to generate an even more profound impact.

### **IMPACT REPORT**

In 2023, we published our first impact report, a huge step forward for our organization. Leveraging the capabilities of our Client Contact Management system, we extracted data showcasing our impact and pinpointing areas where our support has been most crucial for our clients.

Stay tuned this April as we unveil our 2024 Impact Report, arriving in your mailbox. It promises to provide valuable insights into our achievements and how we've made a difference in the lives of those we serve.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Our partnership network has expanded to include 19 other nonprofits and educational organizations. Looking ahead, we're focused on further expanding our network, particularly in the realms of mental wellness and life skills. If you know of a nonprofit that you believe would be a great fit for collaboration, we invite you to share their information with us.

### **CLIENT CONNECTION**

At Pathways, our clients remain our top priority. As the year drew to a close, we celebrated with a delightful holiday party dedicated to them. The event was made all the more special with generous support from two valued partners: the Huntington Beach Assistance League, which provided \$50 gift cards for each client, and NCL, who sponsored a heartwarming Secret Santa exchange. Our dedicated volunteer coordinators went above and beyond, decorating and creating a warm and joyous atmosphere for all to enjoy.

### **RE-COMMITMENT CEREMONY**

To start the new year, we welcomed in a new tradition, a "re-commitment" dinner attended by Staff, Client Coordinators, Clients, and support team members. The evening was a heartwarming gathering, fostering community and meaningful connections. Clients, guided by their coordinators, reviewed, and discussed the commitments Pathways makes to them and those they make to PTI. We finished the evening by creating a "tunnel of love" where we joyfully celebrated our commitments together.



**DIANA INTRODUCING PATHWAYS TEAM TO CLIENTS AT 1/24 RE-COMMITMENT CEREMONY**



**JAN POLLITT, PTI THERAPY DIRECTOR, DISCUSSING HER RESOURCE ROLE WITH CLIENTS**

Additionally, we introduced a new initiative called the Pathways Incentive Program (PIP). This program enables our clients to accrue award points, which can later be redeemed for gift cards. Points are earned through completing various activities monthly, such as contributing to the community, mentoring newer Pathways clients, maintaining timeliness with reports, and actively engaging in their wellness plans. We believe that incentives are vital in establishing and reinforcing positive habits.

We also welcome a new volunteer to Pathways, Katherine Vinson, Client Coordinator. A Client Coordinator is Pathways version of a Case Manager – they are our clients “go to” person at Pathways. Our coordinators are amazing volunteers that give of their time and heart to support each clients journey through pathways.

Katherine Vinson is a senior leader and Change Management professional. She was a 2023 finalist in the Los Angeles Business Journal’s Diversity, Equity + Inclusion awards for her work as a proud Ally in the LGBTQ+ community. What she enjoys the most is empowering people of all levels to be their best and do their best.

Originally from Michigan, she makes her home in Long Beach with her husband and their rescue dog Blaze.

Our theme this year has been “it takes a village” and we are so grateful for your being part of the village that helps these amazing young women transform their lives through education and support.



## *Welcoming New Board Members*



**JONATHAN MICKLIS**

Jonathan brings six years to the non-profit sector and holds a Master’s degree in Behavioral Economics. His childhood was marked by an encounter with homelessness, instilling in him an understanding of the many barriers those

in poverty face every day. Jonathan advocates for access to higher education, comprehensive transportation options, and quality mental health care. He believes in the power of community collaboration to foster a more empathetic and supportive society.



**CYNTHIA GILLIS**

Cindy is currently the Director of Finance for the Assistance League® of Long Beach and has been deeply involved in the Long Beach nonprofit community for the past 35 years. She has held leadership positions with The Junior League of Long Beach, Assistance

League of Long Beach and her sons’ schools’ PTAs in addition to many committee positions in various local organizations, including Pathways to Independence.

She is passionate about the Pathways program, the impact it has on the young women who are involved, and is committed to being a part of this team that supports their growth.



**DR. KEELEY LEWIS**

Hi! My name is Dr. Keeley Lewis and I am thrilled to join Pathways to Independence Board of Directors. Professionally, I serve as the College Readiness Counselor for Los Alamitos High School and also teach part-time at CSULB in the College of Education. I have nearly 20

years’ experience working in education across the K-20 continuum. At the heart of my work and worldview has always been a passion for empowering students to thrive in all areas of their life, particularly in education. Specific areas of professional interest include student identity development, career exploration, positive psychology, continuous improvement in education, and—most especially—supporting students’ postsecondary readiness and success.

Personally, I live in Long Beach with my boyfriend of 17 years and our two cats, Nahla & Tosh. I have come to fully embrace the “Crazy Cat Lady” label, though I am a lover of all animals equally! Outside of work I love to travel, read, and watch The Office on repeat. I look forward to meeting everyone in the Pathways community and working alongside you all in support of our clients’ success!

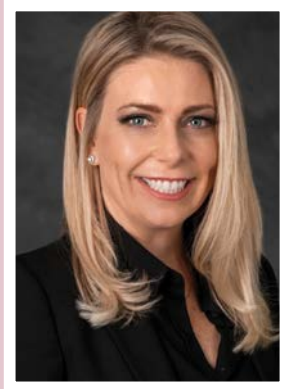


**XUEMEI WEI**

A native Chinese speaker with 17 years of experience in financial services, Xuemei focuses on private wealth management, serving ultra-high net worth entrepreneurs, executives and family offices.

Today, Xuemei works with successful entrepreneurs and business owners, bringing extensive experience and skills to help maximize the value of their businesses at all stages of growth.

For more than 13 years, Xuemei has been a steadfast Ruby Sponsor of Pathways. Now, she’s taking her support to the next level by generously offering her time as a new board member. Xuemei is excited to contribute her experience and dedication, confident that she can help lead Pathways to maintain its impactful role as a Social Impact organization.



**DIANA WOLF**

Diana began her career in the financial industry in 2006 at AG Edwards & Sons. She is now proud to be Managing Partner and to call Pacific Coast Capital Management her own. She wants to help to build the next generation of wealth advisors and inspire women in the industry.

In addition, Diana enjoys giving back to the community having served, volunteered, and donated to many local non-profits including Pathways to Independence and a member of Friends of Pathways, Boys and Girls Clubs of Long Beach (current Board Member,) Non-Profit Partnership (past president,) Ronald McDonald House, and CSULB to name a few.

Diana is excited to further her commitment to Pathways to Independence by serving on the board.





## Message from Board Chair, Raymond Cervantez



Happy 2024! I cannot believe Spring is quickly approaching. 2023 was an exciting year for Pathways to Independence and 2024 looks to be just absolutely amazing. Why? In January, we welcomed five new board members: Jonathan Micklis, Cynthia Gillis, Dr. Keeley Lewis, Xuemei Wei, and Diana Wolf.

Each person brings with them outstanding expertise in Finance, Non-Profit, Education, Counseling, and a slew of previous board experience from various nonprofits within Long Beach and Orange County.

Returning to the board in 2024 are Raymond Cervantez, Lindsay Mais, Tracey Hutton, Jerry Green, Anita Beltran-Sutt, Sylvia Hendron, Ana Lopez, and Robert Casares.

I am also happy to report the Board is in the final creation stage of the 1 to 3 Year Pathways to Independence (PTI) Strategic Plan, with this final stage being the approval and adoption of the work.

Over the course of a year, the Board spent many hours developing the plan. Below is the Process & Timeline, which included both Board Members and PTI Staff:

- Stakeholders Survey - Spring 2023
- Strategy Retreat: Strategic Priorities - Summer 2023
- Strategic Priority Workgroups - Fall 2023
- Drafting Strategic Plan - Jan 2024
- Board/Staff Review Draft Plan - Feb 2024
- Vote on Strategic Plan - March 2024

We were able to finalize a plan focused on three specific priorities: 1) Program Strategy (refine, sustain, grow), 2) Outreach for Fund Development, Recruiting, and Marketing, and 3) Organizational Excellence. The Board is confident that the priorities identified are exactly what is needed to take PTI to the next level.

I would also like to mention that this will be my last President's Report. I have served as the Board President for 3 years and it is time to allow another leader to assume the role. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve PTI in this capacity. I have grown so much as a person and leader by serving as Board President. I am thankful for this experience and I look forward to continuing my contributions to PTI as a general board member.

As I mentioned earlier, 2024 looks absolutely amazing; and, I know that our new Board President will be one of the reasons why.

Thank you for being a part of the light that Pathways to Independence is striving to be in the world.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE  
AS AN INSPIRATION  
TO HUMANITY AND BE  
THE REASON SOMEONE  
BELIEVES IN THE  
GOODNESS OF PEOPLE  
- GERMANY KENT

# Pathways Incentive Program

(PIP)

In support of the newly created Pathways Incentive Program (PIP), we ask your assistance.

We are seeking donations of \$25 gift cards to enhance our incentive program.

If you want to participate and contribute gift cards, don't hesitate to contact Nancy ([nancy.blasi@pathwaystoindependence.org](mailto:nancy.blasi@pathwaystoindependence.org)) for further details.



**YOUNG  
PHILANTHROPISTS**  
of Pathways

One important outcome from the first YPP Leadership Team meeting, which took place in February, is their Mission Statement:

*The Young Philanthropists of Pathways consists of young, dynamic leaders united by four key objectives: Advancing the mission of Pathways to Independence, empowering and involving fellow young professionals and philanthropists, fostering active engagement in networking and leadership pursuits, all with the shared aim to make a positive impact on our community.*

The team also set a fun and creative schedule for the year with networking and volunteerism:

- 5/16 LAWN BOWLING AT RECREATION PARK,  
LONG BEACH WITH TACO TRUCK & DRINKS**
- 7/13 VOLUNTEER DAY TBA**
- 8/10 PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT**
- 12/3 HOLIDAY NETWORKING PARTY**

#### **THE YPP VISION STATEMENT IS CLEAR:**

Empowering a generation of compassionate leaders, The Young Philanthropists of Pathways envision a future where every individual is equipped with the resources and opportunities to thrive. Through dedicated collaboration, innovation, and unwavering commitment, we strive to build a community where empathy, inclusivity, and generosity reign, creating lasting transformations and leaving a profound legacy of positive change.

Interested in helping YPP accomplish this vision? How can you get involved? Join the Young Philanthropists of Pathways for a chance to meet awesome new people, build your network, and team up to create positive change in our community through volunteering. Let's make a difference together while enjoying the fun!

Don't miss another YPP Event. Our next event is on May 16th. For more information, reach out to Lisa Mais at [lisa.mais@pathwaystoindependence.org](mailto:lisa.mais@pathwaystoindependence.org) or text 562-884-3629.





TO INDEPENDENCE™

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

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**BOARD MEMBERS**

Robert Casares – *Treasurer*

Raymond Cervantez

Cynthia Gillis

Jerry Green

Sylvia Hendron

Tracey Hutton

Dr. Keeley Lewis – *Secretary*

Ana Lopez

Lindsay Mais – *Board Chair*

Jonathan Micklis

Anita Beltran-Sutt

Xuemei Wei

Diana Wolf

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



SAVE THE DATE

Pathways  
to Paradise

Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 PM  
at The Beach — CSULB



**DONATE YOUR CAR!**

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

Since its inception in 1991, over 370 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** or Contact Diana Hill at [Diana.hill@pathwaystoIndependence.org](mailto:Diana.hill@pathwaystoIndependence.org)