



THREE MONTHS INTO 2025:


## Celebrating New Milestones at Pathways to Independence


It's hard to believe we're already three months into 2025! The new year has kicked off with remarkable milestones that we're thrilled to share with you.

### Client Update


January has been a month of exciting growth at Pathways. We welcomed five new clients into our family and were delighted to welcome back Tracey—a dedicated coordinator and former board member. We also celebrated the graduation of two clients who have now embarked on promising new jobs, looking forward to a bright future. With these new additions, we're now proudly serving **40 clients**—our highest number since 2017 and nearly double what it was when I first had the privilege of serving as Executive Director. Rebuilding the program after the challenges of COVID has been an incredibly fulfilling journey.


### Our Newest Inspiring Clients


 **MS, 31:** Now in her junior year and beginning her journey at Long Beach State as a Psychology Major, she shares: *"I am so proud of myself for making it into this program. It feels like such a long time coming and to finally meet this goal, it's the ultimate relief. I'm also very happy to be starting college at an actual university. I hope to really settle in with it."*

 **KVR, 33:** Starting her ADN/RN program at Golden West College, she reflects: *"I am so happy to be in this program and given this opportunity and*

*support. Despite the chaos of my life that seems to be mostly out of my control, this program has felt like something that is a blessing and divine intervention."*

 **KD, 34:** In her second year at Long Beach City studying Liberal Studies and planning to transfer to a university in 2026, she shares: *"I am so happy that the Pathways program journey has started and I'm proud of myself for being overall balanced and emotionally regulated."*

 **RG, 31:** A second-year student at Golden West College majoring in Biology with plans to transfer in 2026 and pursue Pre-med, she expresses: *"I am feeling very blessed that I got accepted into Pathways, and I also got a raise at my job. I feel empowered and hopeful."*

 **CH, 32:** A junior at Long Beach State majoring in History and working toward her teaching credential, she states: *"I am feeling happy about being inducted into the Pathways program, and although adding another responsibility to my current course and workload has made me nervous, I am altogether ecstatic to be here. Thank you."*

### Mentor Update

As our client community grows, so does our need for dedicated mentors. We're excited to announce that a long-time mentor Gail Levy has joined us as our new





Mentor Coordinator, working closely with Jan, our Therapist Director, to expand our mentoring program. If you—or someone you know—would like to make a lasting impact as a mentor for Pathways, we'd love to talk with you about this rewarding opportunity.

**Client Commitments:  
A Foundation for Success**

Over lunch with one of our generous and supportive donors, the conversation turned to client accountability. I explained our process and the commitments our clients make to Pathways, and it struck me that many of you might be interested in learning about these important promises. At our recent spiritual retreat and family meeting, our clients renewed their commitment to the values and structure that make Pathways so effective. These commitments include:

**MENTORSHIP:** Establish and maintain a strong relationship with your mentor.

**COMMUNICATION:** Respond to texts, emails, and calls within 48 hours.

**EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION:** Maintain part-time employment (up to 20 hours per week unless otherwise approved) and attend school full-time—12 units in Spring and Fall, 6 in Summer—while meeting academic standards of C's or better and a 2.5 cumulative GPA or better.

**REGULAR REVIEWS:** Meet with the Pathways Education Director each semester to review or update your education plan.

**COMPLIANCE:** Submit required documents and reports on time.

**WELLNESS:** Attend therapy sessions, maintain medical insurance, and prioritize physical health through regular medical, dental, and vision exams.

**ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS:** Keep up with vehicle maintenance, participate in all mandatory events, and act with honesty and integrity in all interactions.

These commitments provide the structure and

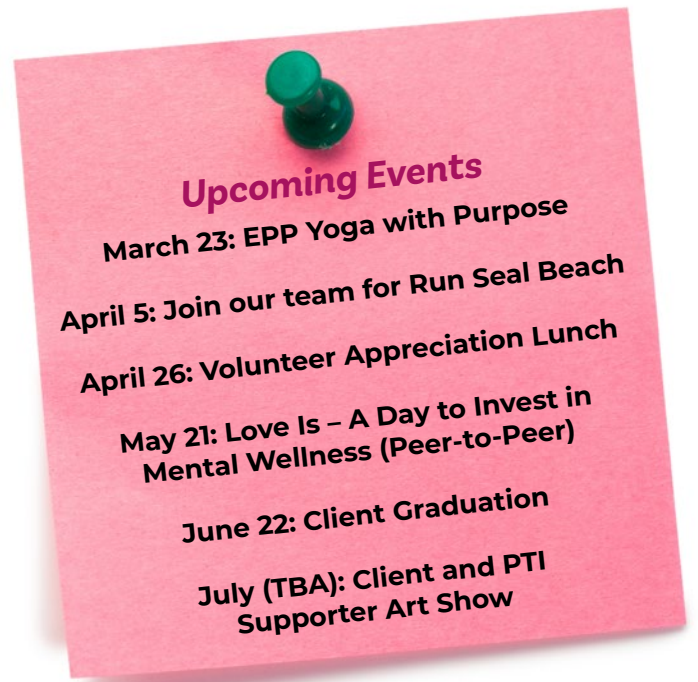
accountability necessary for our clients to succeed—and we couldn't be more proud of their dedication.

**New Leadership for EPP**



We're also excited to welcome our newest Pathways Leader, Emma Giacomini, to the Emerging Philanthropists of Pathways (EPP). With lifelong ties to the program and a passion for raising funds, building meaningful connections, and spreading our mission, Emma is gearing up for EPP's first fundraising event.

**Mark your calendars for March 23rd at Rush Park!**



Thank you for your continued support and for being part of our journey. Together, we are empowering lives, building brighter futures and breaking cycles of poverty and abuse. Stay tuned for more updates, and we hope to see you at our upcoming events!



Love and Light  
Diana D. Hill  
*Executive Director,  
Pathways to Independence*

## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Dear Pathways Community,  
As we step into spring, I want to take a moment to express deep gratitude to three incredible Board members who recently termed off our Board: **Raymond Cervantez, Jerry Green, and Tracy Hutton.** Their unwavering commitment, leadership, and contributions have been truly pivotal to our organization.

Each of them has played a significant role in shaping Pathways to Independence, and we are immensely grateful for their years of service.

At the same time, we are excited to welcome three new Board members: **Sonia Aldana, John Giacomini, and Melissa Perez.** Each brings a unique background and expertise to the Board, and we look forward to the fresh perspectives and leadership they will contribute. Their dedication to our mission is already evident, and we are eager to see the positive impact they will have.

We kicked off 2025 with a **Board Retreat**, where we reviewed our Strategic Plan and set ambitious goals for the year ahead. This time of collaboration and planning has positioned us well for continued growth and success in supporting the clients we serve.

March is **Women's History Month**, and this year's national theme, **"Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations,"** is particularly meaningful to us at Pathways to Independence. This theme honors the strength and influence of women who dedicate their lives to education, mentorship, and leadership—values that are at the heart of our mission. We deeply appreciate the women volunteers, leaders, staff, mentors, champions, and donors who support Pathways, investing their time, energy, and expertise to uplift our clients. Your commitment to empowering others is truly inspiring, and we thank you for the impact you make every day.

As we move forward into another promising year, I am grateful for the collective dedication of our Board, supporters, and volunteers. Together, we continue to change lives, and I look forward to all that we will accomplish in the months ahead.

With gratitude,  
Lindsay Mais  
*Board President, Pathways to Independence*



# YOGA WITH PURPOSE

Come stretch, flow, and transform while supporting a meaningful cause.

**MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup>**  
**10:30AM**

**RUSH PARK**  
**\$22**

All proceeds go towards Pathways to Independence.  
Purchase tickets through QR below.  
Use code: **EARLYBIRD** for \$7 OFF



# Love Is

A DAY TO INVEST IN MENTAL WELLNESS  
& HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

One Heart, One Love, One Day Only, we are excited to introduce our upcoming campaign:

## "Love Is"

Giving Day to Invest in Mental Wellness and Healthy Relationships on May 21!

At Pathways, love means more than just relationships—it's about self-love, a love for learning, and a love for our community. We believe that when these aspects align with strong mental health, our clients step into their power as the strong, empowered women they are meant to be.

This year, we invite you to join Pathways to Independence and the Orange County Community Foundation in raising funds and awareness through the "Love Is" Giving Day.

Pathways to Independence is continuously evolving, looking for new ways to grow as an organization and make positive, refreshing contributions to our clients.

On Sunday, January 19, Pathways participated in our first ever retreat at Soka University in Laguna Niguel, CA. The day-long retreat gave our team a very special opportunity to gather and begin 2025 together as a team.

The first portion of the retreat focused on spiritual wellness. To begin the day, we created the context for our practice and held space for one another. Pathways community welcomed Adrian Sweet to host a beautiful mindfulness meditation. This meditation was a great way to both physically and mentally connect inward, promoting celebration of the self. The moment also included remarkable Sound Bath bowls to help with healing.

Next, clients broke up into small groups to participate in a heart-centered listening exercise led by Client Coordinator, Renee Bancherie. Participants were given the opportunity to observe, listen and speak words of kindness. The co-facilitated group nature of this exercise allowed for clients to demonstrate compassion, within and without.

That afternoon, we shifted our focus to professional growth. Executive Director Diana Hill hosted a panel consisting of female leaders in our community, to include a recent Pathways graduate from Fall 2024, a current client in the program, a local Huntington Beach business entrepreneur, and our current Pathways Fund Development Officer. The panel focused on topics such as communication, etiquette, boundaries, confidence and networking. A shared enthusiasm took over the room and it became an engaging, collaborative conversation. In addition to providing fantastic skills and insight, a unifying support for one another grew amongst staff, volunteers and clients that were present.

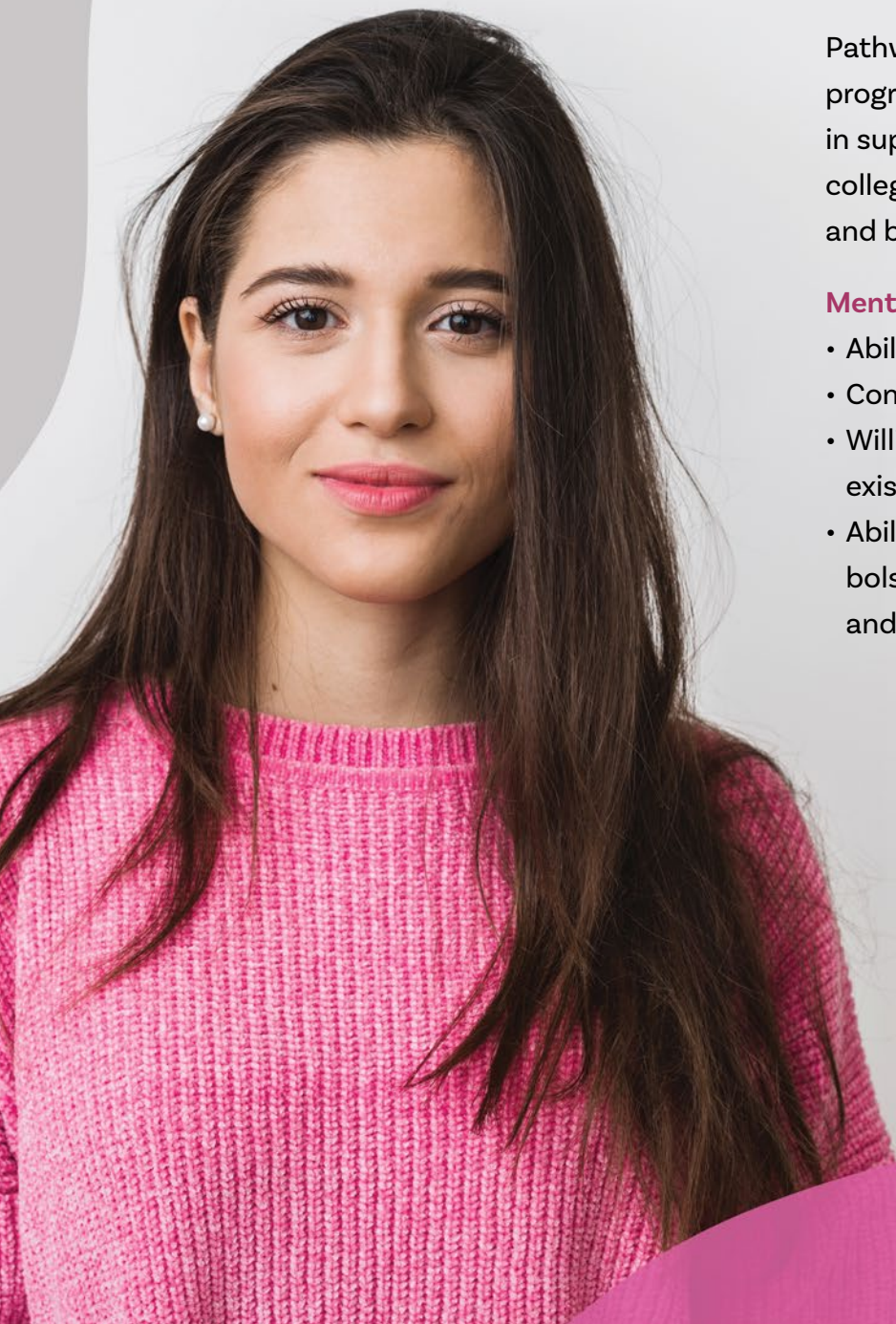
To close the day, the Client Coordinators and their cohorts met to recommit to Pathways contract agreements for the 2025 year. Frequently revisiting these agreements, allows us to stay present in our commitments, while creating communication around each client's individual needs. The more



grounded in these accountabilities, the higher the likelihood of our successes.

Our first annual retreat was about connection; with each other, with our mission as an organization and with our own unique light. Clients, staff members and client coordinators can all agree the event was enriching and empowering, bringing us closer than ever as a community.

**Guest reported Liz Gallagher, Client Coordinator**



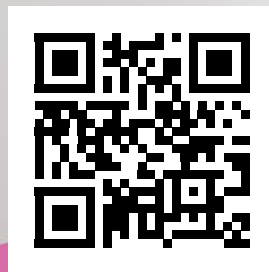
## Make a Lasting Impact on a Pathways To Independence Student!

Pathways to Independence mentoring program is looking for mentors interested in supporting students who are obtaining a college degree in order to transform their lives and break the cycles of poverty and abuse.

### **Mentor Eligibility**

- Ability to collaborate with a team
- Committed to trauma informed philosophy
- Willing to engage and connect mentee to existing college services and resources
- Ability to validate and empower in order to bolster a sense of identity, self-efficacy and connectedness

To learn more, please scan  
the QR code below



# Ali – A “Feral” Cat Mom and Amazing Pathways Graduate



Let me explain about being a “feral cat”— -I mean I had THAT much growth ahead of me! I remember thinking, during my onboarding meeting, that 100% I did not belong...should not be there... and what the HECK were they thinking by letting me into the Pathways program? No one

ever made me feel like I didn’t belong— it was all in my own head. And, of course, I soon felt that warmth and acceptance.

I was part of Pathways from October 2015 to May 2019, during which I earned a degree in Psychology from Cal State Fullerton. While pursuing my Associates Degree, I was invited to join Phi Theta Kappa, an Honor Society, which was a great honor. In addition to my bachelor’s degree, I earned the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) Certification, a national credential, and a big accomplishment for me.

I moved back to North Carolina just a week after graduating. My dad had long- term health issues; and once I had completed my degree in California, I felt it right to move back and begin the next chapter of my life.

Looking back, what was most helpful in earning my degree was the emotional support and accountability provided by Pathways. The program offered financial assistance, mentorship, community events, and overall encouragement, which were key to my success. The volunteers, at every level, poured so much effort into making the program successful, and their dedication truly made a difference.

I owe an incredibly huge thanks to my amazing

mentor, Lilah. I honestly don’t think I would have completed my degree without her. Lilah took the time to get to know me, supported me emotionally, and made a world of difference in my life. I will always be grateful for her care and understanding.

Currently, I work as a senior HR generalist, where my responsibilities include employee advocacy, recruiting, onboarding, leadership training, succession planning, and HRIS system administration. I also helped to create and maintain our company’s first intranet site and work with data analytics and reporting.

Last October I had the honor of speaking at my company’s annual tech convention, where I presented on how to maintain high productivity without compromising well-being. It was a privilege to be invited to speak, and I was truly flattered by the opportunity.

Outside of work, I enjoy playing video games, drawing, painting, and spending time with my family.

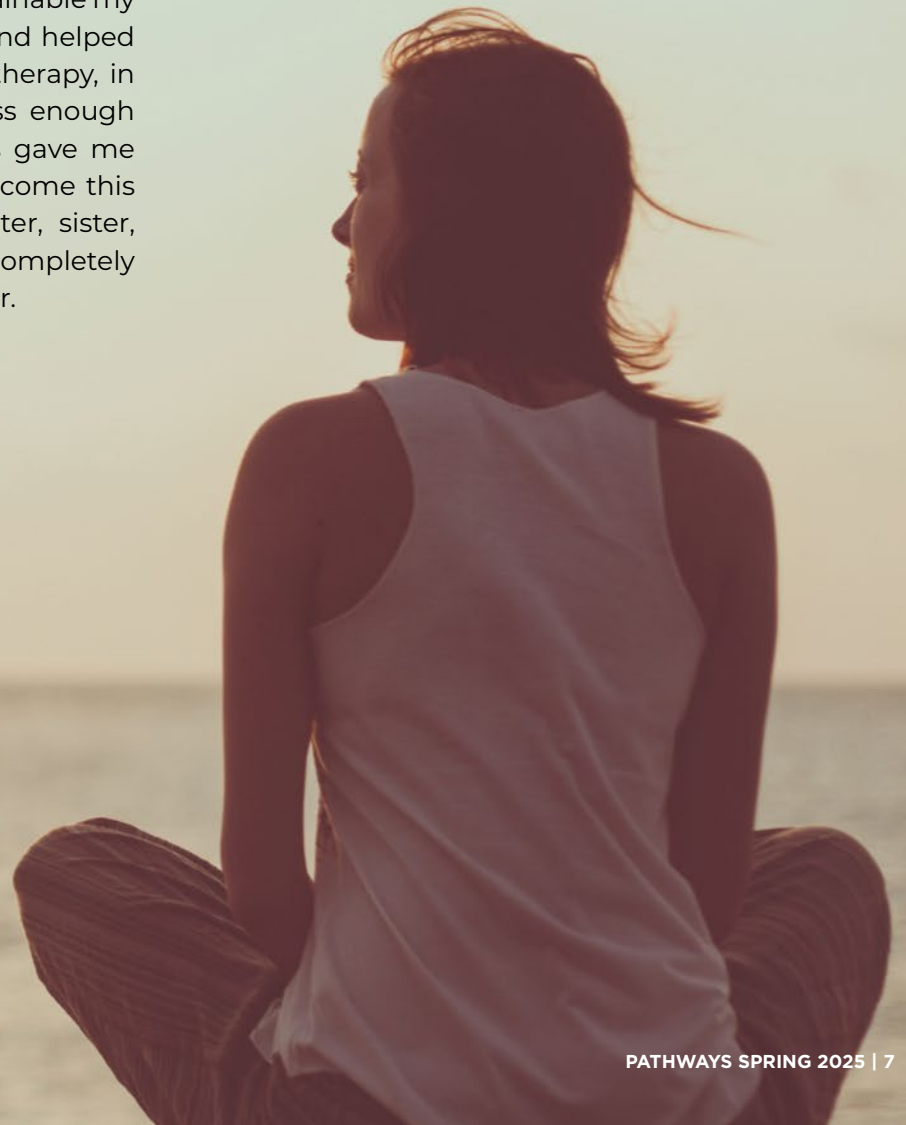


I'm an avid reader, especially of fantasy books. My long-term boyfriend and I have 4 cats in the home I own— yes, I bought a house after graduating! In fact, I've owned 2—having sold the first one when I moved from Charlotte to Durham.

The past two years have been especially difficult, as we faced significant health issues and losses within my family. It's been a tough road, and we're still recovering. However, 2025 has allowed me to focus more on my mental health, and I'm looking forward to visiting California in June to be the maid of honor at my best friend's wedding. I'm beyond excited to get to return to California!

Pathways continues to have a profound impact on my life, more than I can truly put into words. The program not only helped me get my degree, but it changed my trajectory in ways I never imagined. The support I received, especially from my mentor and the entire team—was life changing. I went into the program feeling uncertain and out of place, but the Pathways community showed me how attainable my goals were, gave me the space to grow, and helped me become the person I am today. The therapy, in particular, was invaluable. I cannot stress enough how crucial that support was. Pathways gave me the space to heal and grow, so I could become this BA professional, cat mom, artist, daughter, sister, partner, and friend I am today. Pathways completely changed the course of my life for the better.

**“WHEN I FIRST ENTERED THE PROGRAM, I WAS A BIT LIKE A ‘FERAL CAT,’ UNSURE OF HOW TO NAVIGATE ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES.”**





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

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Diana Hill – *Executive Director*

# SAVE THE DATE

★ FRIENDS OF PATHWAYS PRESENTS ★

# Rodeo Roundup

**SATURDAY**  
**OCTOBER 4 2025**  
**CSULB**



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