



A Season of Gratitude and Growth at Pathways

November has long been celebrated as a month of gratitude, reflection, and community. As I take a moment to pause and look back on this year at Pathways, my heart is full. There is so much to be thankful for, especially the incredible determination and transformation we continue to witness in the women we serve.

This fall, we welcomed five new clients into the Pathways community. Each of these women is intensely focused on building a bright future through education and personal transformation.

CLIENT UPDATE

Meet our new clients:

SM - age 25, attending Saddleback College, in her Sophomore year, Major Psychology, works as a English tutor and Sunday school teacher. What are you most proud of *"I'm proud that I've earned good grades in my classes so far, and that I'm still being active in trying new things and facing the things I need to do. I'm trying to be the type of person who's okay with making mistakes."*

SF - age 21, attending CSULB in her Senior year, Major Theater Arts, works as an in home care provider. How would you rate your overall well-being *"I am feeling very well, happy and no longer really stressed or down."*

JG - age 33, attending Orange Coast College in her Freshman year, Major Psychology, works as a case manager in a recovery center. What are you most proud of *"I'm making all A's in my classes."*

EM - age 34, attending Golden West College in her Sophomore year, Major ADN/RN Nursing, works as: Behavioral Health Technician. What are you most proud of *"I passed my CNA state board exam and so far I have all A's in all my classes except one and that's physio, it's oh so hard to get so much info in such a short time! My brain hurts but I'm trying."*

KG - age 23, attending Golden West College in her Freshman year, Major Nursing, Works as a CNA at a health care facility, What are you happy about: *"I'm excited to move into the Pathways housing!"*

Many of our clients begin their journey at a community college, and this year was no exception. In early summer, four of them attended a transfer workshop hosted by our Education Director, Brenda Gallegos to prepare their university applications. Their hard work paid off. **All four received multiple acceptance letters** and are now choosing where they will continue their

education. Their options include *California State University Long Beach, California State University Fullerton, California State University Los Angeles, and Cal Poly Pomona*. Their majors span public health, psychology, and nursing. We are incredibly proud of every one of them.

NEW TO THE TEAM:

This year we also welcomed a valuable addition to our team. Our new Development Assistant, **Jane Emfinger**, brings a wealth of corporate experience, success with Special Olympics, strong relationships in Orange County, and most importantly, a passion for our mission. We are thrilled to have her join our team.



With growth comes the need for more coordinators, our dedicated volunteer caseworkers. We are excited to welcome **Suzanne Watts** to the team. Suzanne already gives so much to Pathways as a mentor and a Friend of Pathways. Her professional experience included teaching in English Departments at the community college level - Saddleback, Cypress, and Long Beach City College. Since 2009, she is also a practicing certified yoga instructor.



PROGRAM UPDATE:

This year we have served more than 45 clients, including five recent graduates. That **represents a 95 percent increase since I stepped into this role just three and a half years ago, while our budget has grown only 16 percent.** This is a testament to smart stewardship, teamwork, Board support and direction, and the determination of the women we serve.

As we look ahead to 2026, our commitment remains clear. We want to serve more women,

create more pathways to self-reliance, and ensure that every client transitions into her next chapter with confidence and a strong network behind her.

This year we launched a new program called **Pathways Connects**, designed to expand our clients' access to professional networks, mentorship, internships, and employment opportunities that align with their school schedules. Keep an eye out for our 2026 networking and business gathering. We have already seen tremendous success through this initiative, including our first-ever Art Show, where one quarter of our clients displayed their artwork professionally for the first time and forged meaningful new connections.

Many of our clients are actively seeking paid internships and part-time positions that support their educational goals. If your organization has opportunities available, we would love to hear from you. Work experience remains a requirement in our program, and your partnership helps build vital career pathways.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:

October brought another moment of celebration as we gathered for our annual fundraiser. Thanks to the incredible dedication of the **Friends of Pathways, led by the exceptional Lisa Mais**, the event was a tremendous success. This single evening provides almost half of our annual operating budget, and we could not be more grateful. Lisa's leadership extends far beyond this event, and we are fortunate to have her commitment and heart driving our mission forward.

As we move through the final stretch of 2025, I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported Pathways and the remarkable women who are reshaping their futures. Your belief in them matters. Your generosity transforms lives.

Wishing you a joyful and meaningful season of gratitude.



Love and Light
Diana

P.S. To hear directly from our clients, visit the blogs on our website where they share their stories and reflections in their own words.



Introducing our 2025 Changemakers Award Winners

JULIE EVERT

When we think of changemakers, it's often those in the spotlight. But the most impactful are often those working quietly behind the scenes. For Pathways, Julie is one of those people.



Introduced to Pathways over a decade ago, Julie began as a Friend of Pathways, serving on committees and leading our Hospitality team with care and warmth. She later became a dedicated mentor and Coordinator, guiding more than ten clients at once with structure, trust, and quiet grace. Her clients describe her as caring, intuitive, and always present; someone who goes above and beyond to support their journeys. Alongside her, her husband, Joe, has pitched in with vehicles and repairs, making it a genuine family effort. Pathways is blessed to have you, Julie, and we are honored to recognize your contributions this year.

RAYMOND CERVANTEZ

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Martin Luther King Jr.



Raymond embodies this quote. Raymond served on Pathways' board as a board member and board treasurer, and was thrust into the role of President during one of the most pivotal times in Pathways' history. The weight was heavy, the path unclear, but Raymond led with courage, humility, and grace, laying a foundation that not only saved Pathways but made growth and bigger dreams possible.

Raymond, your legacy is not just in what was preserved, but in what you made possible. We will always be grateful that you were the leader we needed when it mattered most, and for having a true Pathways heart.

An Unforgettable Night of Western Fun and Heartfelt Giving

The **29th Annual Friends of Pathways fundraiser**, benefiting Pathways to Independence, turned California State University, Long Beach, into a laid-back rodeo-inspired celebration under the open sky. More than **850 guests** donned their best western wear. They joined in an unforgettable evening filled with country music, signature cocktails, lively line dancing, and even a playful “Pokey” where friends could be hilariously locked up.

Attendees enjoyed a delicious spread from **35 top-notch restaurants** across **Long Beach, Seal Beach, and Huntington Beach**, serving up hearty fare that kept the crowd well-fed and smiling all night long.

This rodeo to remember was made possible by the generous spirit of our community. From our amazing **sponsors** and **restaurant partners** to our **beverage donors, underwriters**, and every guest who joined us, thank you.

When the dust settled, we roped in even more than originally reported. Pathways Rodeo Roundup Raised \$750,000.

Because of your generosity **young women** facing adversity are finding **hope, opportunity**, and a **path to independence**. Your kindness and commitment truly **transform lives**.

We couldn't ride this trail without you!

With heartfelt gratitude,
Pathways to Independence



Thank you to all our sponsors, donors, supporting businesses, and volunteers who made this possible.

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BEVERAGES



Amazing Alumna: Erin's Story of Tranquility and Transformation

Pathways Alum, Erin, a busy mom and professional, still carves out time to provide therapy for current clients. Her story of finding tranquility and transformation will warm your heart:

"These days I am mostly a mom, but for work I supervise new social workers in nonprofits in Los Angeles, and I also have a small private practice where I see clients for therapy. In 2016, I graduated from UCLA, summa cum laude, with an undergrad degree in American literature and a minor in civic engagement. I continued my education at UCLA, completing my degree in social work in 2018".

During my time at Pathways, I lived in the original building on the bottom level. My door led directly out to the small garden with that tranquil little fountain. It was very peaceful and healing to fall asleep each night, listening to the breeze catching the leaves. I also liked to pick apples from the tree in early fall. I was just thinking about those apples recently, as they should be in season about now. I lived there with my cat Roscoe (whom I still have and he is now a 14-year-old Tabby). He liked to scale the fence periodically and travel along its edges.

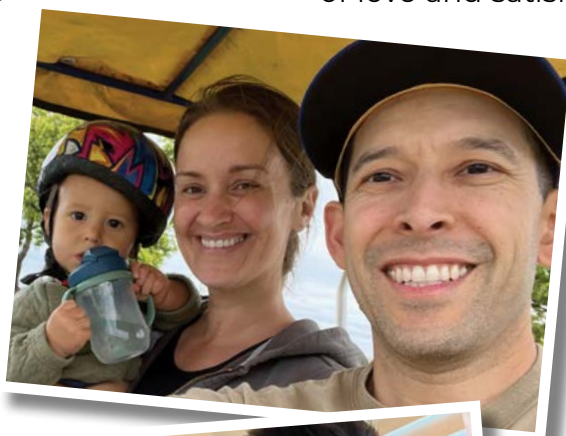
I've been connected to Pathways in recent

years, volunteering space in my therapy practice for young women. It has been some of my favorite work to date. I used to think I owed my therapist so much (and honestly still do), but I now know how much she loved her work with women like me at Pathways. I now experience that same level of love and satisfaction. Out of all the incredible

help from Pathways, she still stands as one of the greatest influences in my life. I can't imagine any other person will ever come that close to helping change my life.

I've accomplished a lot in life since I left Pathways. In addition to a busy career, I am married and now have a toddler named Charlie. In my free time I like to dance and to sew clothing. I have also been athletic for a long time and still enjoy running outside and hiking in the mountains. Next month I am taking Charlie for his first overnight excursion in the wilderness with me.

One of my proudest accomplishments is that I get to be a mom especially because I can see the work of the many great people I encountered in Pathways; in every kind word, every inch of patience, and every time I confirm to my son that his mommy loves him.





Thank you Dean Anthony Salon!

A heartfelt thank you to Michelle Shelton and the entire team at **Dean Anthony Salon** in Long Beach for the **fresh haircuts, blowouts, and goodie bags for 10 of our clients**, before the start of fall classes. Your generosity helped them step into the new semester with confidence. What a wonderful gift.



Emerging Philanthropists of Pathways

EPP loved being part of this year's Rodeo Roundup! We had a blast "rounding up" guests and sending them to our "jail," all in good fun and for a great cause. **It was such a joy** to add a little extra laughter and energy to an evening that supports the incredible work of Pathways to Independence. As we head into the holiday season, **EPP** is looking forward to continuing the spirit of giving by finding new ways to give back to both the community and the clients we serve. **For more info about EPP and how to join, scan the QR code:**



Pathways Board Chair Message

As we wrap up another meaningful year, I'm reminded of the incredible strength that comes from connection. Pathways has always been about people, supporting, believing in, and lifting one another toward a brighter future. That sense of community is what makes our work so special.

Each of you, our clients, providers, donors, volunteers, and friends, plays an essential role in the Pathways story. Your compassion, encouragement, and generosity have helped our clients take bold steps toward independence and opportunity. Because of you, Pathways continues to thrive and grow. Together, we've built something that lasts far beyond a single year, a network of hope, empowerment, and transformation.

Wishing you a joyful season filled with gratitude, renewal, and connection. Here's to all we've accomplished together, and all the possibilities the year ahead holds.



With heartfelt appreciation,
Lindsay Mais
Board Chair





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Please mail to P.O. Box 43, Los Alamitos, CA 90720, or email Nancy.blasi@pathwaystoIndependence.org for more info.
It will ensure our clients in need can enjoy essential supplies and a little extra warmth throughout the year.

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We are launching the **HER** Campaign and invite supporters to make a monthly commitment that fuels lasting change.

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