

Proposed new residence will close the gap to independence

Affordable housing is hard to come by for most but even more so for the young people who come through Visions and Pathways' program and embark on independent living.

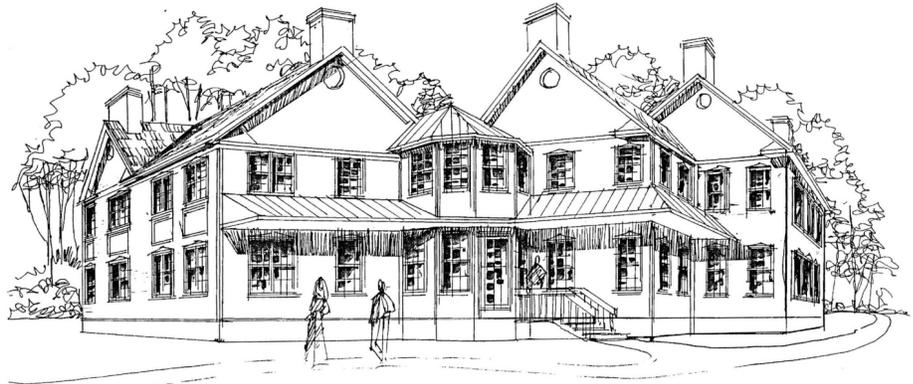
Now, Visions and Pathways is set to embark on a much needed project to build a small affordable housing apartment complex called Bridge House at 8 Third Ave. in Bridgewater.

The land has already been acquired, the drawings have been completed, and approval has been issued by the Bridgewater Township Planning Board.

The next step, according to CEO and Executive Director David Walker, is raising \$1.7 million to construct the all-studio apartment house consisting of 10 units. He said the organization is looking to charitable donors for support as well as to affordable housing lenders.

"When kids are discharged from our programs," noted Walker, "finding affordable housing for them is one of our greatest challenges. These kids are working and going to school. But they cannot afford the rent."

Bridge House, he said, will accommodate very low income young adults who have



ARCHITECT'S DRAWING shows the concept for Bridge House, an affordable residence for young adults who have come through Visions and Pathways' life skills program. Our organization is now raising \$1.7 million to build the all-studio apartment complex, which will rise on Third Avenue in Bridgewater, New Jersey.

graduated from our life skills program. Walker believes it will fulfill an acute need to provide stability to a high need population.

Approximately 800 youth in New Jersey age out of foster care each year, noted Walker, meaning most state support is discontinued. Studies indicate that approximately 25 percent of youth who have aged out become homeless, he reported.

What will be unique about Bridge House is that young residents will still have access to case management and support through

Visions and Pathways' Prosperity program and Behavioral Health Department.

To further provide monitoring and comprehensive support, Visions and Pathways' administrative offices are only two blocks from Bridge House as are several other of the organization's group homes that are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information on the Bridge House project, please contact David Walker at (908) 526-6605, ext. 304, or dwalker@visionsandpathways.org.

Visions and Pathways to embark on social enterprise

What do you get by marrying the social mission of a non-profit with the market-driven approach of a business?

It's called "social enterprise," one of the most innovative approaches today to non-profit funding. Visions and Pathways is among many in New Jersey and throughout the country looking to start a small business as government funding becomes scarcer and scarcer.

Visions and Pathways' approach, however, is unique. Its youth will be involved in all aspects of running the business!

Beyond funding, social enterprise gives young clients of Visions and Pathways the



FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR BUSINESS

RETIRED EXECUTIVES from Central Jersey SCORE are helping mentor Visions and Pathways staff and youth as they plan a social entrepreneurship project.

experience of starting their own business, which will follow them when they leave the program and strike out on their own. "People dream about opening their own businesses, and so do our kids," said CEO

and Executive Director David Walker.

Walker said the organization is exploring several ideas, but the one that seems to resonate is the idea of a "wash 'n' fold," which can start up with laundering machines already in place at the Brahma House residence in Bridgewater.

Furthermore, Walker explained, Visions and Pathways' teens and their supervisors don't need to go to school to learn the skill set involved in a laundry operation.

As early as 2016 Visions and Pathways began looking at social enterprise as a way to decrease dependence on charitable contributions. "Social enterprise is also a

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Prosperity program expands into Morris County

New youth can now make turnarounds, seek higher education

Families from Morris County are now benefiting from Visions and Pathways' home visitation program for youth ages 14 to 21 known as "Prosperity."

Formerly just for youth from Somerset and Middlesex Counties, the Prosperity program is now reaching Morris area participants who receive independent-living skills education, career counseling and employment preparation through weekly workshops, mentoring groups and one-on-one support.

Jennifer Amaya, the director for the department that includes Prosperity, said Visions and Pathways was already reaching Morris County youth through our Street Smarts outreach program, so the decision was made to expand into that region. According to Amaya, Prosperity has added five youth from Morris County and expects to add between five and 10 more by the summer.

Prosperity helps KM change life

KM is an example of a Prosperity youth. After years of homelessness, KM was finally removed from his parents' custody and placed with a resource family/foster home. When he was with his parents, he did not attend school consistently. He failed most of his classes and even missed an entire year of high school.

His Prosperity worker met with him at least weekly, provided encouragement, and made sure he received tutoring and other support. Before long KM made a miraculous turnaround. He made the honor roll several marking periods and this June will be graduating from Piscataway High School.

Prosperity helped him complete college applications, and he is waiting to hear about his acceptance.

Referrals of youth like KM to Prosperity can come from anywhere. "We hang fliers through Morris County advertising the program and what we do," noted Amaya. "We also present to civic groups, faith-based organizations, and schools to share the information."

25 enrolled in program

There are about 25 young people from Somerset and Middlesex counties currently in the program, which began in 1989. According to Amaya, of 44 Prosperity independent living skills clients in 2017, eight are still attending high school, three graduated from high school, six were



PROSPERITY HOME VISITATION program has expanded into Morris County, with new teens to serve like this client (left). Checking in on her is one of Prosperity's Independent Life Skills Counselors, Janayah Chavers.

accepted into college, five attended adult vocational school, and four continued their college education at the region's county colleges and schools like Rutgers, Montclair State, and Bloomfield College.

Youth go on to college

"Many of the youth in the program have transitioned from high school to college while working with our Independent Life Skills Counselors (ILSC)," noted Amaya. "Prosperity teaches youth to be independent and not rely on other social services."

Funds to operate the program in Morris County have come from the Morristown Medical Center, the Morris County freeholders, and private donations. A state contract as well as private donations keep the program running in Somerset and Middlesex counties.

Inside the Prosperity program

Prosperity helps decrease the probability of long-term dependence on public assistance, incarceration and other detrimental life experiences. Through home visits, one-on-one counseling, mentoring and workshops, youth receive instruction in:

- ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING
- FINANCIAL LITERACY AND HOUSEHOLD FINANCE
- JOBS AND CAREERS, INCLUDING WRITING RESUMES
- VOCATIONAL TRAINING
- HIGHER EDUCATION
- INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
- APPROPRIATE WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR
- CULTURAL AWARENESS
- CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND VOLUNTEERISM

Spark! Gala moves to Somerset County for first time



Visions and Pathways is thrilled to announce its fourth annual Spark! Gala will take place Thursday, June 7 at 6 p.m. the Bridgewater Marriott. This is the first time the event has been held in Somerset County.

Members of the business community and supporters from Somerset and Morris Counties traditionally come together for the gala, which raised more than \$50,000 last year for Visions and Pathways programs, including housing for abused, neglected, or homeless teens, combatting human trafficking, life skills training for those headed for independent living, and college scholarships.

Since 1970, over 9,000 youth have benefited from the organization's work.

"A Hopeful Future for Youth" is the theme of the evening. Tickets are \$150, which includes open bar, a cocktail reception and fabulous silent auction, dinner, and entertainment. There are always appearances by the some of the young people who have benefited in the program.

Co-chairs are Takeena Deas, a longtime volunteer for Visions and Pathways' special events, and Pamela Walker, a volunteer from Meridian Health. Broadcasters from News 12 NJ will act as master of ceremonies.

Alquon Hodges will be the keynote speaker. He is a volunteer with Visions and Pathways' mentoring program. His very compelling life story has been compared



TO BE HONORED at the Spark! Gala with our Dedicated Volunteer Award is former Board of Trustees President Marsha L. Montgomery.



BRANDON AND MIMI BAKER (second and third from left), owners of Victory Subaru in Somerset, New Jersey, will be honored June 7 at the Visions and Pathways Spark! Gala with our Community Partner Award for 2018. Victory Subaru has made major donations to Visions and Pathways' programs that combat the opioid epidemic. Visions and Pathways CEO and Executive Director David Walker is at far right. Others pictured are: Sam Spagnuolo (far left), director, Subaru of America, and Michele Chevalier of the Victory Subaru staff.

to Will Smith's character in the film "The Pursuit of Happyness." Hodges is a motivational speaker and is writing a book about his experiences.

At the Spark! Gala, Visions and Pathways honors volunteers and companies that have brought their time and talent to the organization and for the positive impact they have made on the lives of youth. This year, Bristol-Myers Squibb in Hopewell, New Jersey will receive the Corporate Partner Award, Brandon and Mimi Baker of Victory Subaru in Somerset, New Jersey will receive the Community Partner Award, and the Nu Xi Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. will get the Community Leader Award.

The Dedicated Volunteer Award goes to Marsha L. Montgomery of Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, immediate past president of the Visions and Pathways Board of Trustees. Montgomery, a retired performance improvement manager and management consultant, served on the board seven years, beginning in 2010.

To get an invitation or for more information about the event, please contact Adriana Gonzalez at agonzalez@visionsandpathways.org.

Run and Walk for Visions and Pathways set for Oct. 27

Runners and walkers plus their families and friends will come together at Duke Island Park in Bridgewater, New Jersey Saturday, Oct. 27 for Visions and Pathways' 20th Run and Walk For Our Youth's Future.

There will be the traditional 5K run and a 2-mile walk around the park.

Visions and Pathways is working to get increased walker participation this year, approaching schools and senior centers.

The event supports Visions and Pathways' arts and recreation program.



20TH ANNUAL Run and Walk For Our Youth's Future will be Oct. 27 at Duke Island Park in Bridgewater, New Jersey.

Social enterprise to be run by staff and youth is on horizon for Visions and Pathways

(continued from page 1)



Photo credit: Elizabeth Martin Photography

AREA ENTREPRENEURS meet several times a year with Visions and Pathways' youth to inspire them to overcome challenges in their lives. At the Feb. 19 session are (from left): Lewis Gorden, Linda Hill, Cornell Wodard, Grace Ward, and Chris Ward.

natural extension of our plan that youth should be involved with all phases of our program," added Walker.

The organization is lucky because it has two outside groups assisting with the enterprise program: entrepreneurs who meet with the youth to talk about starting

their own businesses, and SCORE, a group of senior mentors headquartered at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg.

In workshops last August and this past February, local entrepreneurs who overcame obstacles to start their own businesses met with Visions and Pathways teens. "Barbers, beauticians, caterers, and individuals who are involved in the entertainment industry have spoken with our kids," noted Walker. "Some have fully committed to their business, and others work fulltime at another job and run their small business for additional income. They are all pursuing their passion. Their experiences give our kids hope and teach them that running a business requires hard

work and determination."

To get additional professional guidance, Visions and Pathways reached out to a team of retired executives at Central Jersey SCORE. The mission of SCORE is to provide free business mentoring tailored to meet the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups. Its volunteers are real-world professionals with time-tested knowledge in such areas as accounting, finance, marketing, management, international, manufacturing and business plan preparation.

One professional advising Visions and Pathways is Alan Haveson of New Providence, New Jersey, who ran a successful industrial distribution and manufacturing business in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania before joining SCORE. "The goal for us is to teach responsibility and what it takes to do a job or provide a service," said Haveson. He said he and a colleague, Lee Horner, have already met with Visions and Pathways executives and over the next months will sit down with youth and their supervisors "to create a road map of what they need to do."

According to Haveson, a business plan is key, so he and Horner intend to help Visions and Pathways create the business plan and move forward. "We stay with it until the ultimate goal is reached," he said. "We are there to suggest how they want to achieve their goal and what they are willing to do to make it work."

Walker predicted the social enterprise will be up and running in the next 12 months.

"We are there to suggest how they want to achieve their goal and what they are willing to do to make it work."

— Alan Haveson,
a SCORE retired executive

Wish List

Because the need is great, Visions and Pathways maintains a Wish List. Items go to the different programs we run, residential and community-based. The Randolph Kiwanis Club has been a regular contributor, and so has the JCC in Bridgewater. Other organizations and companies have also held collections, and we are always grateful when additional groups get involved. All donations may be dropped off at Visions and Pathways, 49 Brahma Avenue, Bridgewater, New Jersey or the Street Smart office at 175 Washington Street in Morristown. To start a collection program of your own get in touch with Jennifer Amaya at jamaya@visionsandpathways.org.

Clothing for Youth (must be new)

Men's and women's slippers
Men's and women's flip flops
Sweatpants and sweatshirts, plain black or gray (Sizes M, L, XL)
White athletic socks (ankle length)
White or colored T-shirts, no pockets (XL, XXL, Tall)
Women's underwear (sizes M, L)

Personal Care

Bars of bath soap
Hair brushes
Hair gel
Shampoo and conditioner
Toothpaste and toothbrushes

Gift certificates (for birthdays and clothing needs)

Stores at Bridgewater Mall such as Hot Topic, Champs, Aeropostale, and House of Hoops by Foot Locker, and freestanding stores like Barnes & Noble, Old Navy, Best Buy, TJ Maxx, Marshalls, Target, and local restaurants, hair salons and nail salons.

For the Household (must be new)

Bakeware (cookie sheets, cake pans, muffin tins, etc.)
Bath towels and wash cloths
Cooking utensils (plastic spatulas and spoons)
Kitchen towels
Pillows
Potholders
Sponges with scrubbers

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Know more about us . . .

Visions and Pathways provides abused, neglected, homeless, and runaway youth with housing, a stable environment, and supportive services that guide them in becoming self-sufficient.

The agency runs 11 programs for vulnerable youth: Brahma House residential crisis intervention program; Passages, My Place and Whitney House residential transitional-

living programs; Prosperity independent-living skills education program; Street Smart street outreach program; Transitional Learning Center for in-house education instruction; Bridge House and Village House, supportive-housing for aged-out youth, an Arts and Recreation Program, and the Transitions Aftercare Program.

Since 1970, over 9,000 youth have come

to seek shelter, food, clothing, and support services.

For more information, visit visionsandpathways.org or contact Executive Director David Walker, Esq., MSW at dwalker@visionsandpathways.org.

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Meet Nikkia Miller-Blakes, our new Visions and Pathways Board President

The new President of the Visions and Pathways Board of Trustees, Nikkia Miller-Blakes, has invigorated the board with new members who have deep experience in strategic planning, human resources, and other key aspects of management. The new board members also bring a tremendous passion for serving the youth and making a difference for our clients. She is very thankful for the work, commitment and effort of the former board members who paved the way.

“It’s exciting to see the levels of expertise we onboarded since the new year,” said Ms. Miller-Blakes, a longtime Board of Trustees member who serves as Johnson & Johnson Technology VP for Enterprise Portfolio and Strategy.

According to Ms. Miller-Blakes, who took over the board presidency this past January, several members left the board in December after serving out their terms, and Visions and Pathways “was left with a big gap.”

She said she and her team wanted to be thoughtful in their choices for new board members. Board members reached out to professionals in Central New Jersey and have established a newly constituted Board that is well suited to create new opportunities and meet the challenges Visions and Pathways may face in the months and years ahead. “I think we’ve injected enhanced diversity of thought and experiences,” Ms. Miller-Blakes said. “This will enable us to take our mission to new levels.”

One Board goal, she said, is to refresh the organization’s strategic plan. Another is to refine and amplify our brand image, including social media presence. Still another is to strengthen and expand our network of donors to diversify our funding sources. These will enable the organization to grow and broaden our impact, she explained.

Among the challenges she is tackling is

broadening the services that the organization offers to its youth. This is being pursued through exploring possible synergies with other non-profit organizations. “We are evaluating the general needs of neglected New Jersey youth to assure that we provide the right services and create the right new possibilities for the youth we serve,” she noted.

Additionally, she went on, the board is exploring complimentary services like social entrepreneurship (see story on Page 1) to make the organization financially stronger.

Ms. Miller-Blakes, a resident of Somerset, brings to the presidency a wealth of business experience and volunteer activity. She worked on Wall Street for five years before moving to Johnson & Johnson 19 years ago. After taking a United Way Board training course, she learned about Visions and Pathways through her Johnson & Johnson connections and joined the Board.

Through the years she has served as Assistant Treasurer and headed the Board Development Committee, playing a key role in the exponential growth of Visions and Pathways through construction of new facilities, hiring, and expansion of programs. She will serve as President through January 2019.



Nikkia Miller-Blakes

Volunteer Spotlight

Scholarship Committee expands; plans more events

Visions and Pathways' Scholarship Committee is on the move, expanding its scope to do more fundraising and looking for volunteers to participate in the once-a-month committee meetings where members review applications from the organization's youth looking for financial support for college or trade school.

Joy Mathiowdis, a member of the Visions and Pathways Board of Trustees and now chair of the Scholarship Committee, said the work the committee does – assisting Visions and Pathways' youth with \$500 to \$2,000 college or vocational school awards each year – is vitally important. "I know how important education is for career success," noted Mathiowdis, a pharmaceutical executive whose parents were both teachers and who taught school herself for five years early in her career.

"We want our clients to be independent," she said. "Having them go on to school and get a job are of keen interest to our board."

According to Mathiowdis, doing more frequent fundraising at fun events will allow the committee to award even more scholarships. It used to be, she recalled, that the committee had one event, a dinner, with a 50-50 raffle, and the funds raised covered one scholarship.

Now, she went on, so many more Visions and Pathways clients are looking for scholarships that the committee has had to raise its sights. "We are making sure our scholarship programs continue," said Mathiowdis.



PICASSOS ALL! Paint and Sip event at Pinot's Palette in Morristown raised more than \$2,000.

The first fundraiser was earlier this spring at Pinot's Palette in Morristown, where supporters came together for a night of art and wine. Next, Mathiowdis is looking at a summer event in Somerville at the restaurant Verve.

To look over scholarship applications committee members meet once a month for an hour or two from September to June. Members include three Trustees, three community volunteers, and staff

Assessment of candidates, according to Mathiowdis, is "very professional." However, there is a lot of work to be done, and Mathiowdis would like to find more volunteers. "We welcome anyone who is interested in supporting education," she stated.

Wish List

(continued from page 4)

Toilet paper
Tupperware-type food storage sets
Twin-size sheets and pillowcases
Water (cases or bottles)

For Recreation

Art supplies
Batteries (AAA, AAA for games, electronics)
Headphones/ear buds
Chess games
Movie theater passes
Journals
Sketch books
3D puzzles
Yoga

For School

Highlighters/white board markers
Notebooks
Pens/markers
Reference CD-ROMs (Dictionary, Thesaurus, Atlas, Encyclopedia)
Scientific graphing calculators (for high school math classes)

Sponsor Something Special

* Donate tickets or money for a group outing (adventure, aquarium, museum, movie, bowling, theme park, laser tag, Broadway show, sporting event).

* Donate funds for creating special school memories (school yearbooks, class rings).

You can make impact: a gift in will or trust

Interested in helping homeless teens, both now and in the years ahead? A simple, flexible and versatile way to ensure Visions and Pathways can continue our work for years to come is a gift in your will or living trust. Your gift also entitles your estate to a federal estate tax charitable deduction.

Some of the legacy investments you can make also include:

* Retirement Plans – Designate Visions and Pathways to receive part or all of what remains of your retirement plan after your death. Such transfers can be a tax-efficient way of making a gift. For example, heirs may receive as little as 30 percent of a retirement plan from a large estate after estate and income tax, while Visions and Pathways would receive 100 percent of it.
* Insurance policies—Designate Visions and Pathways Endowment Fund to receive all or part of a life insurance policy. Ask your insurance company for a beneficiary designation form.

We also welcome donations of stock and other securities. To learn more, please contact Visions and Pathways Executive Director and CEO David Walker, Esq., MSW at (908) 526-6605, Ext. 304 or dwalker@visionsandpathways.org.

If you include Visions and Pathways in your plans, please use our legal name and Federal Tax ID.

Donors Change Lives Forever

THANK YOU to the companies, foundations, and service organizations that have made generous monetary contributions from October 2017 to date* to support Visions and Pathways and the homeless and runaway youth the agency serves.

Affinity Federal Credit Union Foundation
Aldersgate United Methodist Church
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Rite Aid Foundation KidCents
Ronald McDonald House Charities
Rotary Club of Morristown
Somerset Local Arts Program
South Branch Reformed Church
Subaru
Swiftwater Foundation, Inc.
TD Bank
The Jewish Federation
Trinity United Church
Tyler Foundation
Wegmans

*As of April 27, 2018

You are cordially invited to

Visions and Pathways 4TH ANNUAL SPARK! GALA

Thursday, June 7, 2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Bridgewater Marriott

700 Commons Way, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

**Open Bar, Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction; Dinner and Entertainment
Business Attire**

\$150 per person, \$50 of which is tax-deductible

R.S.V.P. by May 25, 2018

Tickets can be purchased online at: <https://visionsandpathways-sparkgala2018.eventbrite.com>

For more information:

call 908-526-6605 ext. 312; or email agonzalez@visionsandpathways.org

Here is the
Spring 2018 issue
of your
Visions and Pathways
newsletter.

*Thank you
for investing in the
future of our youth!*

SUCCESS STORIES: When homeless youth find a home or get a job

Meet AR, age 20. AR came to live with us when he was 18 years old. Before moving into our My Place transitional living program/group home, AR was living with his father. They were continuously getting into physical altercations due to his father's drinking and AR not following curfew as well as bringing friends to the house for parties when his father was working.

AR's father put him out of the house. He contacted our Street Outreach Program, letting them know he was homeless. AR said he wanted to do better in his life and talked about how his father did not like him and no longer wanted him in the house. AR was accepted in our transitional living program and was able to continue his education and graduated from high school at the end of the school year.

We put family services in place where AR was able to have ongoing family therapy with his father and mother. The relationship between son and parents improved. AR's father told his son how much he wanted him to come back home to live, but he could not bring him back until he learned how to be more responsible. AR finished

high school and was admitted to Raritan Valley Community College, working to earn a degree in theater arts. He also worked part-time and saved his money to purchase a car.

He returned home to live with his parents, and they all continue to work on improving themselves and their relationship.

Meet CA, an 18-year-old female, who arrived in the United States from the Dominican Republic to live with her aunt and work toward a better life. Her aunt used her to help with babysitting and to be a maid around the house without paying CA for her services. She slept in the basement

on the floor, and there was no one to turn for help.

CA did not get a chance to go to school because she was too busy taking care of her aunt's children and cooking and cleaning. She contacted her parents and asked if she could return home due to her extreme negative living conditions. However, her parents told her she had to do whatever her aunt asked her to do because her aunt was providing a place for her to live and food to eat.

CA ran away from her aunt's house and was picked up by the police. The police notified our Street Outreach team, and we admitted CA to our supervised transitional living program. CA pressed charges against her aunt for forcing CA to work late hours and not paying her for her work.

CA is now attending community college, where she is working toward a degree in social work, and is employed at Wendy's Restaurant. She said she wants to help others who may not be able to help themselves because *"we all can use a helping hand from someone when things are not going well in our lives."*

