

### Real Talk is a 'tell it like it is' program

When young people hear about addiction and other hardships from people who have “gone down the wrong path,” the impact can be tremendous.

That is the thinking behind “Real Talk,” a Visions and Pathways program that brings together two groups: vulnerable youth and young adults who have overcome challenges to turn their lives around. “Some of our ‘Real Talkers’ have been incarcerated or struggled with substance abuse,” said David Walker, executive director.

The adults who participate in Real Talk are recommended by Visions and Pathways staff members, faith-based organizations, and other non-profit groups.

One of the adult speakers was Iris G. of Perth Amboy, a former substance abuser who has been clean for 20 years and now works as a director of an agency program to combat HIV/AIDS. Ms. G. told the group she started doing drugs and abusing alcohol as a young woman and went into a downward spiral that ended when she put herself into recovery.

Following completion of a 12-step program,



Iris G.

she stayed clean, went back to school and began a career in social services.

Ms. G. said she did not hold back when talking about her life experiences. She told the teens she came from a good family with supportive parents. “I started hanging out with the wrong people, I started taking drugs, and it all happened so fast,” she related. “You get into a situation where your family or friends can no longer help you. Then you really have to think how you got here

and take responsibility for yourself.”

She also told the group there is no shame in asking for help. “You do have to do the work yourself,” she added.

She urged the youth to figure out what they want in life and to make realistic goals. “Keep it simple,” said Ms. G. Furthermore, she warned there may be relapses. “Relapse is part of recovery,” she stated. “Never give up. If you relapse, come back and do it again. That’s part of life.”

According to Jen Amaya, director of outreach and prevention, the focus of Real Talk is on prevention. “The point of this is to have the youth relate to the presenter,” she explained. “These are people who have been where they are and who have come out on top.

“It is not a lecture or a workshop. Rather, it is an open conversation with questions and answers. It’s a real conversation, Real Talk.”

David Walker added, “The youth have been very responsive. They get to ask questions in a relaxed atmosphere with no judgment.”

### Youth get first health and fitness program

Hip hop music spills out from the activities room at Brahma House as Visions and Pathways residents get a good workout as well as learn to express themselves through movement.

Weekly hip hop classes, along with yoga and kickboxing, are scheduled for the teens as part of the new health and fitness program started six months ago.

During the summer, teens got exposed to Zumba, a mixture of Latin music and dances that creates a dynamic, fun, and exciting atmosphere. “Participants were highly enthusiastic, said Elizabeth Alfaro, Arts and Recreation coordinator. “They looked forward each week to the classes taught by Zumba instructor Luis Martinez, who also teaches at Kean University.”

In October, Visions and Pathways brought on weekly hip hop classes taught by instructor Rhasheena Richardson.

“Both hip hop and Zumba are an hour of total physical workout,” said Alfaro, “and they are a big part of the health and fitness program.” She said Visions and Pathways had long wanted to initiate such a program but had to wait until

*(continued on page 6)*



**NEW HEALTH AND FITNESS** program at Visions and Pathways features weekly kickboxing lessons. Young men and women both are enrolled, getting the benefit of exercise while learning offensive and defensive martial arts techniques.

## Street Smart reaches teens

### *16-year-old from Bridgewater researches and writes posts*

How do you reach young people with messages about opioid addiction, depression, suicide prevention, human trafficking, or homelessness?

Social media, that's how.

Through social media, Visions and Pathways' teen-focused Street Smart program has started to develop educational posts that are resonating with the local population its serves as well as with a larger audience outside Central and Northern Jersey.

The posts are going out through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media favored by teenagers. This post on Facebook is very recent:

*DID YOU KNOW: Homeless children are 9 times more likely to repeat a grade, 4 times more likely to drop out of school, and 3 times more likely to be placed in special education programs than their housed peers?*

Several youth volunteers are writing the posts, including 16 year-old Rohit Agrawal from Bridgewater, a junior at Bridgewater-Raritan High School. Rohit has been a volunteer for the past year as part of his participation in his school's community service organization, called the Relief Club.

Rohit feels there can never be enough



**MEXICAN FARE** from Chipotle in Bridgewater helped fuel a fall fundraiser for Visions and Pathways. Rohit Agrawal from Bridgewater, a 16-year-old junior at Bridgewater-Raritan High School, organized the fundraiser in addition to his volunteer duties doing social media posting for the Street Smart teen outreach program.

information out there on the issues of homelessness, suicide prevention, and opioid abuse, not only for the young people who are directly involved but also for the youth who need to recognize signs of stress in their friends. "It is important for all young people to take action on these issues as well," he stated.

Along with his social media posting and volunteer duties, Rohit believes in supporting Visions and Pathways financially. A fundraiser he organized at Chipotle Mexican Grill at the Bridgewater Commons in October under the restaurant's "One for the Team" charitable program brought in more than \$100 for the organization.

Rohit made flyers to hang in school hallways and posted on social media asking students and their families to eat at Chipotle that day.

He also used posters, flyers, and social media to create interest in Visions and Pathways' annual Run and Walk for Our Youth's Future.

"Getting involved with Visions and Pathways is a great opportunity for young people around here," he said. "I find it very rewarding," he said. "I'm doing what I am passionate about."



**COMMEMORATIVE BRICK** donated by a Visions and Pathways supporter is laid in the Walk of Wishes pathway at Brahma House by facilities staff member Steve Louissaint. Visions and Pathways has just ramped up its campaign to "Buy A Brick."

## Campaign to buy a brick gathers steam

Here's your chance to be immortalized! With a gift of \$250 or more, donors can request a personalized brick in our Walk of Wishes, a serene garden walkway in the backyard of Visions and Pathways' Brahma House.

This permanent symbol of support for Visions and Pathways can memorialize a loved one, celebrate an occasion, offer words of encouragement, or pay tribute to family and friends. One foster mother buys a brick each time she adopts a foster child, and the child's name is inscribed on that brick.

When donors contribute \$250 or more, the development office will be in touch with them about the message they would like inscribed on the commemorative brick. For additional information, please contact Adriana Gonzalez at (908) 526-6605 ext. 312.

# Spark! Gala raises \$58,000 for Visions and Pathways projects



Members of the business community and supporters new and longtime of Visions and Pathways came together June 8 for the organization's Spark! Gala at the Park Avenue Club in Florham Park, New Jersey.

The gala raised \$58,000 to support 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 benefitted from the organization's work.

Theme for the evening was "A Hopeful Future for Youth." There were cocktails, dinner and dancing, a silent auction, and moving speeches by some of the young people who have benefited in the program.

Co-chairs were Erin DeLoreto and Ted Eldracher. Walt Kane, news anchor with News 12 NJ, served as the master of ceremony.

AT&T, First Energy/Jersey Central Power and Light, and Hartford Funds were the Silver Sponsors. Patron sponsors were Nisivoccia LLP, DACS Inc., and Erin and Michael DeLoreto.

David Walker, CEO and executive director of Visions and Pathways, opened with remarks about the mission of Visions and Pathways. "We are increasing our emphasis on prevention, fighting the opioid epidemic through aggressive street outreach and in-home support and strengthening our services for aged-out youth," he said.

Among the featured speakers were a few of the agency's youth. Before coming to

Visions and Pathways, **Calvin** told guests, he experienced a turbulent childhood living with his father in an impoverished city in California. Because of a crisis in his father's house, he was forced to live with his mother in New Jersey. His mother made it clear that she did not want him to stay with her and rejected him when he arrived from California.

Homeless, unemployed and with no support, he was at risk of not graduating high school and becoming mired in a world of drugs and crime. Fortunately, he connected with Visions

and Pathways Street Smart outreach program and eventually moved into the agency's group home for young men. He started making better choices, was able to excel in high school, and is gainfully employed. He began college this fall.

**Celeste**, a self-proclaimed "crack baby," spoke about her lifelong struggles. She endured physical and sexual abuse by family members and strangers. She experienced many failed placements with foster families and was living in a shelter when she first learned about Visions and Pathways. With help from Visions and Pathways' prosperity life skills program, **Celeste** is working, enrolled in business school and living in an apartment that is subsidized through the agency's Village House program.

The evening's honorees included: AT&T/AT&T Pioneers (Corporate Partner); Shake Shack in Bridgewater (Community Partner); Stan Prater, area manager for JCP&L (Community Leader); and Bonnie Hodge of Randolph, New Jersey (Dedicated Volunteer).



**SILENT AUCTION BIDDERS** found tickets to professional sporting events, dinners at restaurants, and many luxury goods and services at the June Gala.

## Volunteers – we couldn't do it without you!

Without volunteers and volunteer groups, Visions and Pathways would not have nearly the effectiveness it has as an organization.

Over the past year volunteers have assisted with many tasks for the organization, including fundraising, meal preparation, emergency snack and hygiene bags assembly, and school supplies drives.

Needed painting projects were undertaken by volunteers at Brahma House, Passages, and Whitney House. In addition, plant-savvy volunteers performed gardening and beautification chores at Bridge House, My

Place, Whitney House, and Brahma House.

Many were recognized at the annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner in the spring.

Among them were:

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (Nu Xi Omega chapter)
- Atlantic Health System
- Camp Keshet
- Center for Faith
- Dental Care Somerset
- Henkel
- Home Depot
- Jack and Jill Central New Jersey chapter
- Janssen

- Jersey Cares
- Junior League of Morristown
- Liquid Church
- New Jersey American Water
- Novartis
- Randolph Kiwanis Club
- Roche Molecular
- Rutgers
- Raritan Valley Community College
- Somerset Relief Club
- St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church.
- Swaravedika
- Women Empowering Women

# Tricky Tray



**WARM WELCOME** to Tricky Tray guests at the County College of Morris in September (photo left) comes from: Zoila Gonzalez (left), director of administration for Visions and Pathways, volunteer Bonnie Hodges (right) of Randolph, New Jersey, and Danielle Radigan (seated), Visions and Pathways' communications specialist. It was an evening with great food, entertainment, and a chance to win dozens of baskets (photo right) filled with opportunities for dinners at restaurants, admission to professional sporting events, travel/vacations, services, and goods.

## WISH LIST

Because the need is great, Visions and Pathways maintains a Wish List, where items go to the different programs we run, resident and non-resident. The Randolph Kiwanis Club has been a regular contributor, and the JCC in Bridgewater collected for Visions and Pathways during its March Mitzvah Madness event. 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](mailto: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  
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).

## 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](http://visionsandpathways.org) or contact Executive Director David Walker, Esq. MSW at [dwalker@visionsandpathways.org](mailto:dwalker@visionsandpathways.org).

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## Cherish International gives scholarship

A Visions and Pathways' client is studying to be a medical assistant under a \$2,400 scholarship given to her by the local branch of the charity Cherish International Inc., which is headquartered in North Brunswick, New Jersey.

Keyri T. has been with the program for the past two years. Keyri was able to graduate high school and is continuing her education, having just had a baby. "Even after the baby was born, she didn't let the everyday trials and tribulations get to her," said Jennifer Amaya, director of outreach and prevention. "She stayed focused and was so surprised and appreciative to receive the scholarship." Keyri is studying at the Parsippany campus of the Branford Hall Career Institute.



**SCHOLARSHIP** of \$2,400 to enable Street Smart client Keyri T. (right) to continue her training as a medical assistant was provided by the local chapter of the charity Cherish International Inc. Educator Usha Chatty of Kendall Park, New Jersey is the group's vice president.

## Success Stories: When homeless youth get a home

### Meet E.J.

E.J. is currently in her senior year of high school and homeless. Not many of us can say we have been in the same shoes. She was living with a friend when Outreach was called by a school counselor. She is currently undocumented and trying to focus on school.

A spot opened up at Visions and Pathways, and she was placed at Passages. This placement will allow her to finish her senior year and to find stable employment. Meet S.K., J.G. and K.E.

S.K., J.G., and K.E. are three very determined clients in the Transitions Aftercare program who just obtained employment after a long search. S.K. is a student at American institute (studying business), and she recently obtained a part time job that she enjoys.

S.K. is very passionate about helping others and plans on opening a business

that is dedicated to working with children who have special needs.

J.G. had been looking for a job for months and recently began working full time at a warehouse. She works in the morning and then drives straight to school in the evening to continue her education. J.G. is very driven and has a bright future ahead of her.

K.E. is a student at Raritan Valley Community College who is studying nursing with the goal of becoming a registered nurse. She recently obtained a part-time job, which she goes to when she's finished with class and homework assignments. K.E. balances all of her duties in order to perform at school and work to the best of her ability.

All three clients are making strides in the right direction and are ambitious to make the most of their future.

# Celebration held to honor Hispanic Heritage Month

To honor Hispanic Heritage Month in October, Visions and Pathways put on a celebration at Brahma House that rocked the rafters with a Zumba dance demonstration, musical performances, and foods from almost every Latin country from Cuba and Colombia to Mexico, Puerto Rico and Peru.

Zumba, a mix of Latin music and dance, was performed by Visions and Pathways residents Sjockiea W., Kaili L., and Selena R. Following the Zumba performance Selena R. sang a song, "Como La Flor," which was made popular by the American singer-songwriter Selena, who was murdered in 1995.

Staff and teenagers, both Spanish-speaking and non, participated in a fun contest where they had to guess the name of a song, the singer, and the home country of the singer.

Following the activities and performances, there was a feast made by staff members. Elizabeth Alfaro, Visions and Pathways arts and recreation coordinator who was in charge of the Hispanic Heritage celebration, contributed empanadas, Cuban pastries

known as pastelitos and flautas, a kind of filled tortilla.

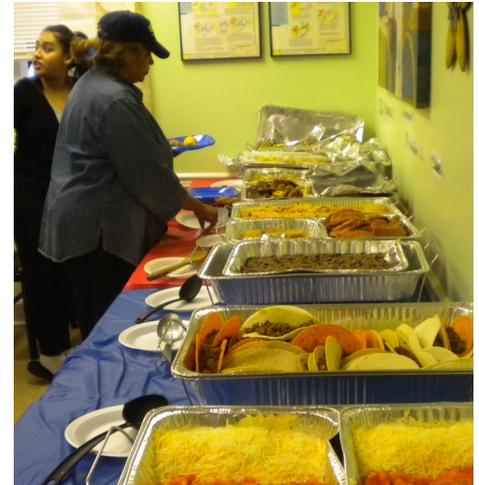
Other staff members made guacamole, rice dishes, and pupusas, a stuffed cornmeal cake from El Salvador. There were beverages from Latin America and tasty desserts such as flans, pastries, and tres leches cake.

Prior to the celebration, teens had been engaged in their art classes making flags from Spanish-speaking countries the world over. A contest was created, and during the festivities it was announced that the flag from Mexico was the contest winner.

Alfaro said the celebration enabled teens of Hispanic origin to celebrate their heritage while giving non-Spanish youth a window into the Hispanic culture. That night, participants and guests were all "Somos Latinos."



TRIO OF residents enjoy the celebration.



MOUTHWATERING DELICACIES from almost every Latin country were on the menu at the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration.

## Easiest way to make an impact: a gift in your will or living 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 an unlimited 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 Home 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 Edward Kirchgessner, MBA, Visions and Pathways Finance Director, at 908-526-6605 EXT. 306 or [ekirchgessner@visionsandpathways.org](mailto:ekirchgessner@visionsandpathways.org).

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

## Dance, kickboxing part of new program

(continued from page 1)

funding and staff were in place.

Yoga classes, according to Alfaro, are good for restoring calm. Kickboxing, she noted, "teaches our youth offensive and defensive techniques and drills through a

mixture of hard core exercises combined with martial arts." The instructor is Irvin Charleston, of Way of Fitness.

"During each athletic session, each instructor incorporates a five to 10-minute educational talk about the importance of healthy eating habits, healthy foods and the importance of being active throughout the day," Alfaro added.



ZUMBA, an exuberant mix of Latin music and dance, was taught all summer to young residents of Brahma House by instructor Luis Martinez (left). Dancers are Kaili L. (center) and Sjockiea W. (front right).



KICKBOXING sparring partners are (from left) Wilson Q. and Lamar C.

## Donors change lives forever

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

Adesa, NJ  
Affinity Federal Credit Union Foundation  
Aldersgate United Methodist Church  
Allen&Gerritsen  
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Apple Food Services NJ  
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Rite Aid Foundation KidCents  
Rotary Club of Morristown  
Somerset Hills Kiwanis Foundation  
Somerset Local Arts Program  
South Branch Reformed Church  
St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
Strength Condition  
Subaru of America, Inc.  
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TD Bank  
Town of Morristown  
Tyler Foundation  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Somerset Hills  
United Methodist Women - First United Methodist Church  
Urban League of Morris County  
WellCare Health Plans of NJ  
Zeus

\*As of November 2, 2017.

## Lisa Warren involved with Visions and Pathways more than 32 years

When most organization volunteers burn out after five or 10 years, Visions and Pathways has benefited from the extraordinary efforts of one volunteer for more than 32 years.

Lisa Warren, a lawyer with Johnson and Johnson, served 30 years as a member of the Board of Trustees, was its president for a term, and now is back serving on Visions and Pathways' Advisory Council.

"During my tenure, I cycled through every role on the board, except for that of treasurer," Warren recalled.

No one person is responsible for the incredible growth and mushrooming reputation of Visions and Pathways, but Warren and her board colleagues year after year made monumental decisions that developed into the institution Visions and Pathways is today.

She joined the board as a kind of natural continuation of her experiences during college working with at-risk teenagers and during law school in New York staffing legal clinics for teens undergoing counseling.

How does she explain her long tenure? "I really like the organization's mission and really loved helping the young people served by it," noted Warren.

When she started her board service, homeless teens were quartered in just one rented house in Raritan with seven or eight beds. "It had its beginnings essentially as a youth shelter for runaways who were placed there by the courts or the state," she said. Among the advances Warren said she is most proud of the transformation of the Bradley Gardens Firehouse into Brahma House, with 12 beds and facilities for counseling, meeting, and additional programs, and planning for, building, and establishing the programs now known as Passages, our transitional living facility, as well as My Place and Whitney House.

One of the most important parts of the Visions and Pathways mission is to fund college and technical school scholarships for deserving youth who are thriving in the program. In 2013, when Warren was celebrating a "milestone birthday," her brothers generously funded a scholarship program in her name to honor her decades-long commitment to Visions and Pathways.

Warren was delighted and proposed that the scholarships be based on academic achievement, need, and a commitment to community service.



**COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS** for deserving Visions and Pathways youth are made each year through a scholarship fund begun by the family of longtime volunteer and board member Lisa Warren (center). One of this year's Warren Scholarships was won by Matthew Gamble (left), who is a student at Rutgers. Warren and News12 New Jersey anchor Walt Kane (right), master of ceremony at the Visions and Pathways Gala in June, presented Matthew with his award.

Recipients each do a minimum of five hours of community service annually. "I wanted to add the community service component to the scholarships," said Warren, "because that was my way of encouraging kids to pay it forward."

Here is the  
Year-End 2017 Issue  
of your Visions and Pathways  
donor newsletter.

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

Visit us at [www.visionsandpathways.org](http://www.visionsandpathways.org)

## Hundreds walk and run for at-risk youth

Runners and walkers plus the families and friends who came out to support them thronged Duke Island Park in Bridgewater, New Jersey Oct. 28 for Visions and Pathways' 19th Run and Walk For Our Youth's Future.

Emcee for the event was Bill Spadea of NJ 101.5 radio, and special guest was Jessica Nutt, a multimedia journalist who is on Fox TV's "Chasing News" weekdays. Nutt

participated in the run and came in first in her age group! Other special guests included State Sen. Kip Bateman, who participated in the 2-mile walk.

CEO and Executive Director David Walker was thrilled with the turnout, especially because the event supports Visions and Pathways' arts and recreation program. "We go to the theater, we have

a health and fitness component, Zumba, yoga, painting, photography -- anything to help our kids find inspiration, expose them to a different way of life," noted Walker. "We keep them feeling positive about themselves and the potential for the future."



**SPECIAL GUEST** for the Run and Walk for Our Youth's Future was Fox TV's Jessica Nutt, who posed with CEO and Executive Director David Walker before starting the run.



**RUNNERS** are cheered on by their families and friends. More than 100 took part in the fundraising event.