A growing Visions and Pathways moves into Union County

With the continued need in Central New Jersey for beds for homeless youth, Visions and Pathways has opened a residence for young women 18 and older in Plainfield. Although Visions and Pathways has had an Outreach program in Plainfield for six years, this is the first time the organization has established a residential facility in Union County.

Under a partnership with Loving Care Homes Inc. in Plainfield (LCH), Visions and Pathways will operate LCH’s residence for females who have nowhere to live.

LCH turned to Visions and Pathways to operate its program because of the extensive experience our organization has in this arena, according to Visions and Pathways CEO and Executive Director David Walker.

Walker said LCH’s search for a partner coincided with Visions and Pathways’ efforts to establish a residential site in Union County because the organization’s Transitional Living Programs are at capacity.

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With new grant, Jewells mentor program for young women expands from Somerset County into Morris County

Through a grant of $2,500 from the Junior League of Morristown, Visions and Pathways has expanded its successful female mentoring program known as Jewells into Morris County. Currently the Jewells program is running only in Somerset County.

The organization is enrolling Morris County young women ages 13 to 24 in a twice-a-month educational program, which includes arts and recreational activities and classes on healthy eating, hygiene, sexuality, dating and relationships, self-esteem, etiquette, and substance abuse.

Other topics to be covered are: financial literacy, resume preparation, and mock job interviews.

There are up to 15 participants in the mentoring sessions with four adult volunteers.

Sessions are led by adult mentors with input given by the mentees on what topics they would like to cover. One-on-one mentoring is available as well. Field trips are also part of the program.

The Jewells program is named in memory of Pamela Jewell Walker, the late wife of Visions and Pathways CEO and Executive Director David Walker. Mrs. Walker died last year. Empowering Pathways CEO and Executive Director David Walker.

According to Meissner, the organization – with the help of professionals—is starting to rebuild its website and greatly expand its media presence. He and his daughter Nicole have begun a campaign over social media to grow Visions and Pathways’ social media base and connect with a broader group of people interested in promoting opportunities for youth.

"WE HELP KIDS" is a raffle promotion the Meissners dreamed up to connect Visions and Pathways with users over Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Anyone who follows Visions and Pathways over social media platforms can win a raffle drawing for a free dinner for two or gift card at area restaurants.

A number of local businesses are supporting the social media campaign by donating dinners or gift cards for defined months. Those who have graciously stepped up include Caffe Piazza in Hillsborough, The Cheesecake Factory, Maggiano’s Little Italy, and Seasons 52 in Bridgewater.

"Be sure and follow us and have your friends follow us as well," said Meissner enthusiastically.

On the fundraising front, Meissner has brought new energy to the organization (see story this page left). Beside the events Meissner planned at Top Golf in Edison and the axe throwing contest in Green Brook, the organization is hoping to sponsor a full-fledged car show and food truck rally this spring.

New fundraisers attract sport lovers

With more than 100 climate-controlled hitting bays, HDTVs in every bay, and a cool sports bar and restaurant, Top Golf in Edison is a destination where socializing is a sport through a blend of technology and entertainment.

On Sept. 29, supporters of Visions and Pathways came out to socialize to benefit the organization’s programs for youth. The afternoon event, which included lunch, refreshments, raffles, and golf, was part of a new initiative on the part of Visions and Pathways’ administration to find fun, interesting, and offbeat ways to raise money.

The Top Golf participants had a good time — no pressure to have a good golf swing or score points.

On Nov. 9, it was hatchets flying through the air as supporters of Visions and Pathways who love adventure flocked to Stumpy’s Hatchet House in Green Brook for the Kick Axe Tournament. This event raised money for the Bridge House Project, which will add 10 additional units to the residential complex on Fourth Avenue in Bridgewater.

New fundraisers like the ones at Top Golf and Stumpy’s are smaller in scope and appeal to Visions and Pathways’ supporters of varied interests. Look for more fun activities in the coming months, including possibly a car show and food truck rally.

The fall Run and Walk for Visions and Pathways successful again

Runners and walkers plus their families and friends came together at Duke Island Park in Bridgewater, New Jersey on Oct. 19 for Visions and Pathways’ 21st Run and Walk. For Our Youth’s Future.

There was a traditional 5K run and a 2-mile walk around the park. The event supports Visions and Pathways’ arts and recreation program.

The emcee was Bill Spadea, host of “Chasing News,” which is on Channel 9 at 11 p.m. and later on Fox 5 News. Spadea is also the morning drive-time host on Radio Station 101.5.

Participants warmed up before the events with fitness trainers Tracy and Natalia of Fit Body Boot Camp in Bridgewater Commons. As prizes for runners, Tracy donated two gift certificates for training sessions.

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There are many other avenues Meissner is exploring, including having people make donations to Visions and Pathways in lieu of flowers for funerals; making estate donations; having a “dip jar” in area businesses for countertop-on-the-spot credit card donations; and championing Visions and Pathways as one choice for the Bar and Bat Mitzvah projects that young teenagers take on as part of their religious training.

Another idea that Meissner just announced is an on-line store for holiday gifts, including sports memorabilia and Disney art and sheet music. To see the exciting gifts that are available and to order, go to https://www.memorabiliaforcharities.com/visions. Make sure that the code VISIONS is used in order for purchases to support Visions and Pathways.

Down the road are sales of Visions and Pathways’ branded items and tutorials on how people in the community can set up their own simple fundraisers or do birthday/milestone event donations via Facebook.

Since that chance conversation in the gym about Visions and Pathways, Meissner has become one of the organization’s most valued volunteers. “All of this is fun and challenging,” he said. “I am working with a number of great people who make all the ideas I mentioned really possible. The more folks we can get involved, the more ground we can cover.

“We are always looking for people to assist us on current and new events, our website, and with our expanded focus on fundraising.”
Spark! Gala at Bridgewater Marriott attracted 150 guests and raised $82,000 for V & P programs. With photos (Adriana will send to me).

With finding outside funding so critical today, Visions and Pathways is proud to report that the annual Spark! Gala in June at the Bridgewater Marriott raised $82,000, the highest in the organization's history.

Visions and Pathways CEO and Executive Director David Walker paid tribute to the companies and individuals who supported Visions and Pathways' event.

Funds raised by the gala support the agency's programs, including outreach and prevention services (which combat the opioid epidemic and help human trafficking victims), temporary housing, arts and recreation, counseling, life skills training, scholarships, and more. Since 1970, over 10,000 youth have benefited from the organization’s work.

The gala is Visions and Pathways' largest event. This year's gala honored Bausch Health in Bridgewater with the Corporate Partner Award and Claire Calandra, a former president of the Visions and Pathways Board of Trustees who is now serving on the Advisory Council, with the Dedicated Volunteer Award.

Calandra, a lawyer, corporate training specialist, and professor at the Rutgers Business School, was instrumental in bringing together the strategic alliance between Visions and Pathways and the International Youth Organization in Newark.

Bausch Health is a global company whose mission is to improve people’s lives through its health care products, primarily in the therapeutic areas of eye health, gastroenterology and dermatology. More than 60 Bausch Health employees have volunteered to perform service projects at Visions and Pathways' facilities, including painting, meal preparation, and playing games with residents. Additionally, employees conducted a drive to gather personal health items for residents.

"The gala is our biggest event of the year, where everyone comes together in support of our organization, and we recognize the companies and individuals who are so critical to our success," said Walker. "This year's gala was a very uplifting evening."

Walker was especially appreciative of principal speaker Dennis C. Miller, an author, motivational speaker, leadership coach, and CEO who has helped hundreds of nonprofit organizations find a roadmap forward past obstacles that seemed insurmountable. Miller helped raise funds for the gala and even stepped in at the last minute to lead the evening's live auction.

Chair of the gala was Pamela Walker, a volunteer from Meridian Health. News 12 New Jersey anchor Della Crews acted as master of ceremonies.

At the gala Visions and Pathways formally recognizes its scholarship-winning students. Jessica Williams, who just graduated from the Plainfield Academy for the Arts and Advanced Studies, was the recipient of the Lisa A. Warren Scholarship Award. Jessica now attends Montclair State University and wants to be a plastic surgeon.

David Sinchi won the AT&T Pioneers Scholarship Award. He just graduated from Parsippany Hills High School in Parsippany, New Jersey and now attends Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His goal is to become a 3-D animator and videogame designer.

Sponsors for the gala included AT&T, Bausch Health, Nisivoccia, LLP, and Hackensack Meridian Health.

ARTWORK OFFERED in the Visions and Pathways Spark! Gala auction in June gets the attention of Visions and Pathways' CEO and Executive Director David Walker and Della Crews from News 12 New Jersey, who was the gala's master of ceremonies.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER David Sinchi (center) was honored at the Visions and Pathways gala in June. Visions and Pathways Scholarship Committee members are Suzanne Balian (left) and Sandra Seidorf.

GUESTS AT the gala like Joe Macri bid on items in the silent auction, including sports tickets, meals at area restaurants, art, and services.

GALA SPEAKER Dennis C. Miller, CEO, author, and life coach, chats with Visions and Pathways Board of Trustees member Keraya Jefferson.
Success Stories

Street Outreach

CM

CM is a 22-year-old who has been with Visions and Pathways since 2015. V & P has assisted CM in staying independent from her father for 3 and 1/2 years. It has never been easy. CM came to the United States from Africa to stay with her father. However, her father didn’t feel that he had to support his daughter, so he kicked CM and her sister out. V & P helped find them a room to rent and assistance in furnishing that room.

We assisted CM in finding numerous jobs and then watched CM move to Louisiana, where she stayed for a while and received her Nursing Assistant certification. CM then moved back up to Morris County, where we assisted both her and her sister in finding another location to rent. Through donations from the food pantry, we were able to assist with furnishing that space as well. We again helped CM find employment and things were calm.

CM found out she was pregnant (expecting in May) and began to feel overwhelmed. We assisted CM in finding mental health resources to make sure both she and the baby were fine during pregnancy. We linked CM to a therapist, whom she sees regularly, and encourage CM through her journey. Before she became pregnant she wanted to switch to being a Medical Assistant. She worked on a payment plan with her program and was paying $250/month. V & P was able to link her to a scholarship that was able to pay off the program. CM completed her GED and Medical Assistant certification and is now ready to have her new baby and get a job as a medical assistant.

Transitions Aftercare Program

KL

KL is a young lady whom we have been working with in the Transitions aftercare program for almost two years. KL has grown tremendously as a person and has taken advantage of the independent living skills offered. She recently was the recipient of a scholarship provided by Visions & Pathways, which will go towards her school funding. KL attends RVCC, studying criminal justice with the goal of becoming a lawyer. KL plans on graduating from RVCC within the next year and is excited on continuing her educational studies. The scholarship KL received will benefit her tremendously & she is thankfully for the opportunity.

NB

NB has been in the Transitions aftercare program since the fall of 2017. NB at first was not doing well at his college and was not driven to complete his studies after numerous study sessions together. Then NB registered for the JobCorps in Edison last fall because he wanted to study mechanics. After a recent meeting at his school with his counselor, Visions and Pathways staff was happy to hear that NB has become an excellent student with a perfect attendance. NB is completing all of his assignments, passing his tests, and is always on time to his classes. After his completion of the mechanics program, he would like to pursue the advanced auto program, with the dreams of opening up his own auto shop. NB has been putting to use his independent living skills that he has learned in the Aftercare program. NB aims to keep up with his success.

Asking families and faith-based institutions to house older youth

Young people without somewhere stable to live yet often find tremendous success living with families in the local community.

Now, through its Transition aftercare program, Visions and Pathways is forging new relationships with faith-based institutions that facilitate placement of aging-out youth with caring families.

The Transitions program is asking church and religious organizations and their members to provide housing for youth who are in college, working, or both. All placements have a maximum stay of 12 months.

David Walker, CEO and executive director of Visions and Pathways, said his organization is looking to faith-based community outreach because houses of worship have a track record of helping young people and families in crisis. Youth who are placed with affiliated families often gain insight from people of faith regarding effective ways to move forward with their lives, he added.

Beyond Transitions, he noted, Visions and Pathways wants to develop and foster long term relationships with local clergy and houses of worship to assist with other Visions and Pathways projects, including tutoring, mentoring, and arts and recreation.

Our first faith-based housing partner is Lion’s Gate Ministries, Inc. in Bound Brook, a non-profit that works with young men. It is run by Minister Rob Cruver and his wife Debra.

The Lion’s Gate residence is housing two young men, Pierre and Javier, who have aged out of the Visions and Pathways residential program but who still need support and a place to live.

“It is our privilege to partner with Visions and Pathways, whenever possible, to meet the needs of and empower these young people to succeed,” said Debra Cruver, one of the Lion’s Gate founders and president of the Board of Directors.

Lion’s Gate Ministries, launched in 2017, gives at-risk young adults ages 18 to 25 a boost toward independence by providing housing and emotional, social, intellectual, physical, and spiritual support services.

“Each person we serve has a face, a unique identity, a story all their own,” said Cruver. “They are so much more than their ‘need.’” Lion’s Gate also reaches out to host families willing to house a young adult. This dovetails with Visions and Pathways’ own program to find host families for its youth.

“The success of the Transitions program has allowed us to reach out to more individuals who would be interested in providing housing to our aging-out youth,” said Jennifer Amaya, director of Outreach and Prevention for Visions and Pathways. To help ensure participants’ safety, she noted, Visions and Pathways conducts a thorough background check on all host family members.

Paying minimal rent so they can learn about lease agreements and responsibilities, the clients live in a family environment, where they learn necessary life skills. “Many of the youth coming to Visions and Pathways have extreme trust issues with adults and their peers,” Amaya noted. “Being able to live in a family home and feel included in the family is great for the youth’s overall wellbeing and growth.”

While staying in faith-based housing or in private homes, all youth in the Transitions program have access to a coordinator for case management as well as the Visions and Pathways’ Behavioral Health Department for therapy and counseling services.

Amaya noted that to be accepted into Transitions, all youth have to have been enrolled in the Visions and Pathways program for at least one year and have successfully completed the Prosperity independent living skills program.

Faith-based institutions and families who may be interested in becoming a host for the Transitions program should get in touch with Jennifer Amaya at jamaya@visionsandpathways.org.
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's programs for vulnerable youth include: 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. The Loving Care Homes residence for homeless women is our most recent initiative. In addition, V & P has an affiliation agreement with Newarks International Youth Organization (IYO), IYO has served Newark’s highest need youth for almost 50 years. Since 1970, over 10,000 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.

Know more about us . . .

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*As of November 2019

**Donors change lives forever**

THANK YOU to the companies, foundations, and service organizations that have made generous monetary contributions from January 2019 to date* to support Visions and Pathways and the homeless and runaway youth the agency serves.

- Affinity Federal Credit Union Foundation
- African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ
- Aldersgate United Methodist Church
- Allen & Gerritsen Allstate Foundation
- Amazon Smile Foundation
- Anonymous
- Apple Food Services NJ
- Arc Foundation, Inc.
- AT&T
- AT&T Pioneers
- Atlantic Health System
- Bank of America
- Belle Meade Co-Op
- BlackRock Gives
- Bound Brook Garden Club
- Branchburg Township Local 397
- Branchburg Woman's Club
- Bridgewater Woman's Club
- Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
- Broad Reach Benefits, an Alera Group Company, LLC
- Chiesa, Shahinian & Ganttomasi, PC
- Christian Fellowship Club of Concordia
- The Congregational Church of Bound Brook
- Curtis McGraw Foundation
- DACS, Inc.
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- Direct Energy
- Dombal-Vogel Foundation
- Dunellen Green Brook Rotary Club
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- George Gramby Observance
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- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
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- Hillsborough Irrigation and Landscape Service
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- Hillsborough Reformed Church
- Hope Church
- Hyde and Watson Foundation
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- J. Williams & Company
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- The Jewish Federation
- Johnson & Johnson
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- Jolyon Foundation
- Junior League of Morristown
- Kiwanis Club of Livingston
- Kiwanis Club of Randolph
- Lakeland Bank
- Latch Key Pets, LLC
- Liquid Church
- Macy's
- Mailbox Business Center
- Meissner Family
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- Morgan Lewis & Bockius, LLP
- Morris Arts
- Morris ROTC
- Morris County
- Neshanic Reformed Church
- New Jersey Performing Arts Center
- New Providence United Methodist Church
- Nisivocia, LLP
- New Jersey American Water
- NJM Insurance Group
- One Simple Wish
- Our Lady of the Mount Church
- Peapack Reformed Church
- Petrock's Bar and Grill
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- Phillips-Van Heusen Foundation
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- Rite Aid Foundation KidCents
- Rotary Club of Morristown
- Shop Rite of Hunterdon County, Inc.
- Somerset County
- Somerset County Business Partnership
- Somerset Hills
- Kiwanis Foundation
- Somerville Elks
- South Branch Reformed Church
- St. Joseph's Catholic Church
- Strength Condition
- Subaru of America, Inc.
- Swiftwater Foundation, Inc.
- Trinity United Church
- Tyler Foundation
- Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Somerset Hills
- United Methodist Women - First United Methodist Church
- Wegmans Food Markets, Inc.
- York Fence
- Construction Company
- Zeus Industrial Products, Inc.
**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 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, Aerostyle, 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 (AA, AAA for games, electronics)
- Movie theater passes
- Journals
- Sketch books
- 3D puzzles
- Yoga supplies

### You can make impact: include a gift in your 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 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 Visions and Pathways Director of Finance Indumati Patel at 908-526-6605 or ipatel@visionsandpathways.org.

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

### Mental health counseling now offered at home

For the first time Visions & Pathways will be offering mental health counseling to youth living with their families, resource families, or foster homes. Under the state’s Intensive In-Community behavior assistance program, Visions and Pathways will send its therapists into the field to provide services to youth ages 13 to 21.

To be eligible, participants must be receiving Medicaid. Up until now, Visions and Pathways could only direct therapy programs to those in residence.

### 2019 Volunteer Groups

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Nu Xi Omega chapter
- Atlantic Health System
- Bausch Health
- Center for Faith Justice
- Central Jersey Church of Christ
- Deloitte
- Dental Care Group
- Dental Care Hillsborough
- Direct Energy
- Dream Project of New Jersey
- Eagle Riders Club
- Evangel Chapel
- Fit Body BootCamp
- Gateway Church, Bridgewater
- Girl Scout Troop # 60711
- Hillsborough High School
- Home Depot
- Janssen
- Jersey Cares
- Johnson and Johnson
- Junior League of Morristown
- Liquid Church
- Morristown Medical Center
- Nestle
- New Jersey American Water
- Novartis
- Novo Nordisk
- Randolph Kiwanis Club
- Raritan Valley Community College
- Roche Molecular
- Rutgers University
- Shake Shack
- Somerset County SERV
- Somerset Relief Club
- Synchronoss Technologies, Inc.
- United Health Care
Visions and Pathways has begun recognizing outstanding service by employees through an Employee of the Year and Employee of the Month designation. Employee of the Year is Mathew Ajayi, a residential counselor at Passages, the Visions and Pathways’ facility on Fourth Avenue in Bridgewater. He usually works the overnight hours.

Ajayi has been with the organization for the past two years. He was recognized for his hard work, dedication, and punctuality. “I never miss a shift,” said Ajayi, who was born in Nigeria.

Ajayi finds a lot of satisfaction working with teenagers. “They can be unpredictable, happy one minute and moody the next,” said Ajayi, a resident of Plainfield, New Jersey. “Today they might be having a good time and tomorrow not. But whatever happens today, I take it. And whatever happens tomorrow, I take that, too.”

The most recent Employees of the Month are: Ruth Alvarenga, a Life Skills counselor, maintenance staff member Harry Ayala, and Sharon Avery, the organization’s health and nutrition manager who also works as a resident advisor.

Sharon Avery: Employee of the Month

Mathew Ajayi: Employee of the Year

Ruth Alvarenga: Employee of the Month

Harry Ayala: Employee of the Month
Here is the Year-End 2019 issue of your Visions and Pathways newsletter.

Thank you for investing in the future of our youth!

Visions and Pathways benefits from projects by corporate employees

Donations from corporate partners often go to Visions and Pathways programs. But benefits of corporate involvement most affect residents when companies send employee teams to paint, renovate, and refurbish living spaces or provide meals to those who live there.

Direct Energy Business from Iselin, New Jersey recently completed a $5,000 renovation project at Brahma House that has enabled residents to enjoy a refurbished library, dining area, and outside picnic area.

Sleek new dining room tables and chairs came from Ikea, as did eight new dressers for residents' bedrooms. Direct Energy employees during a special in-service day at Brahma House painted, assembled shelving, and put together picnic tables.

"Brahma House really looks different after the work Direct Energy has accomplished," said Visions and Pathways CEO and Executive Director David Walker. "We are so grateful for the contribution from the company and the efforts of its employees."