

VISIONS AND

PATHWAYS

Summer 2023 Newsletter

Elevating our Youth

Through our Wellness program, Visions and Pathways youth learn about health and fitness, participate in arts and recreational



SUNSET IN THE DESERT
created by T.V. 17 year-old



NIGHT IN THE WOODS
created by T.V. 17 year-old

activities, engage in religious observances of their choice, and express themselves through visual arts and writing. This newsletter highlights our youth's artistic expressions and our Bridge House supportive housing campaign.



PINK AND PURPLE
created by M.K. 17 year-old

A Message from Zonie LeSane, Chair of the Bridge House Capital Campaign.



Zonie LeSane

Hello All, as Chair for our Bridge House Campaign, it's with great honor that we're announcing this initiative. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thank you to Visions and Pathways. I truly appreciate the time that I'm spending working with our Board and

all the staff bringing this tremendous project to life.

This will be a great opportunity to work and learn from the many volunteer committee members that will come together to help us move this project over the finish line towards our goal.

I look forward to your support and working with many of you as we launch this project forward, which will serve so many of our homeless youth in New Jersey.

Warm regards,
Zonie LeSane
Chair, Bridge House Campaign

"Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flow charts. It is about one life influencing another."
John C. Maxwell

Bridge House raises over \$1.5 million, **Closing the Gap to Independence, Bridge House** is an affordable housing project planned for 8 Third Avenue in Bridgewater. A two-bedroom house and detached garage are currently located on the property that is owned by Visions and Pathways (V&P). Upon completion, the new building will consist of ten (10) studio apartments and accommodate very low-income individuals. Support services for the residents will be provided through V&P's Prosperity independent living skills program and our Behavioral Health Department.

All V&P's group homes are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Through Prosperity's staff, the Behavioral Health Department's counselors and the other V&P staff in proximity, Bridge House will receive comprehensive support.

Most Bridge House tenants will be young adults, ages 18-24, who have "aged out" of foster care. Aging-out is a phrase used to describe youth who are discharged from the child welfare system because they reach

the age at which most state support is discontinued. Each year, approximately 800 youth in New Jersey age-out and are often without access to safe, affordable housing. Studies have indicated that approximately 25 percent of youth who have aged out become homeless. Bridge House will help redress an acute need to provide stability to a high need population.

Visions and Pathways has secured the site and received preliminary plan approval. Based upon code changes, it is necessary to obtain new approval from the local planning board. Securing

sufficient capital funds, estimated at \$3 million, is the primary hurdle to moving forward with this exciting affordable housing project. HOME funds made available by the American Rescue Plan, \$1.165M to support Bridge House will come through Housing and Urban Development. In addition, the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York (FHLBNY) awarded V&P \$400,000 to support Bridge House.



Writing from the Heart, My Story...

Day-in and day-out, the nightmare just kept rolling in. As a little boy I didn't really know what to expect. Moving from home to home, family to family, I just wanted it all to be over. Wishing that my parents would appear once again and take me home, but my dreams died away, slowly drifted away into the sky with the wind. Slowly drifted into my feelings, hoping and wishing I could be loved again.

It was a chilly foggy morning when I thought everything was OK. My parents made the conscious decision to leave me on my uncle's doorstep. Erasing me from their existence! My uncle opens the door to find me just sitting there in the cold. He decides to bring me into the warm home. My uncle decided to raise me like his own, but somehow, I knew he wasn't my dad. I didn't fit in. I felt like an outsider. I was different; the way I looked, how they had been treating me. Just everything about it made me realize at a young age that I didn't belong. So, I started to think about the fact that my parents just gave me up. The thought of that just tore me to pieces. My mind was racing and to make matters worse, my uncle said I was nothing less than a monster. After that, I've been moving from foster home to foster home, trying to build a family again.

Then came the day that I had been wishing for about four years later, I was given to a family that was all about second chances! For about one year I was with the same foster family and for the first time I felt a sense of love and knew that they would be my new family. It took a while but after 19 months I was finally adopted. From there marked a new beginning, my name changed from Johnny Albert to a different name. As time passed, I got older and the family I once knew changed dramatically!! As I got older, they became harder on me. Every little thing I did was always wrong in their eyes. Soon after, my dad became very abusive toward me and my sister and I had no way to express myself. I felt trapped; I never spoke up because I started to run away from my problems. Every time I would get into trouble with my parents, I already knew the consequences, so I tried to escape them and started to run away from home. Sometimes I would be gone for long periods of time like months, but my parents never cared or even bothered to ask me where I was or if I was sleeping somewhere safe at night. That's because they didn't care anymore, they said I was just like every other hoodlum in the streets. My mom said that they're in the streets because there is no one else left that cares about them, so I was just thrown away like someone's trash.

Eventually, I got into trouble with the law. My
(continued on page 4)

Giving Thanks

Multicultural musicians, singers, dancers, and poets will be featured at the Visions and Pathways fourth annual Giving Thanks Festival at Drew University Concert Hall on June 24. This year, Lisa Black, WBLS-FM radio personality, will emcee the event that raises funds to provide housing, education, counseling, and other assistance to New Jersey's homeless and vulnerable youth.

"I was humbled to be asked to emcee this year's Giving Thanks Music Festival which supports disadvantaged and neglected youth," said Black. "I look forward to celebrating this joyful event with a line-up of talented artists who committed to helping neglected children in our community."

"We are thrilled to partner with Ms. Black and so many talented artists to celebrate life and to inspire unity and love for children who tend to be overlooked by society," noted David Walker, Visions, and Pathways CEO and Executive Director. "Money raised from the event will help fund important initiatives such as the 'Bridge House' affordable housing project to help New Jersey youth who become homeless when they 'age out' of foster care."

Over the last three years, the festival has raised more than \$19,000 to support youth in need throughout the Garden State.

This year's exciting line-up of Giving Thanks Music Festival multicultural performers include:

- Gospel and soul singer Robert "Buddy" Williams, III, Irvington
- Spektrum Afrikan, an African dance company, Newark
- Praise dancer Imani Carr, Newark
- Poet Stangaza Stephens "April Showers", Montclair



With participation from Nivea Nieves, Matei Varga, Elizabeth Alfaro, Robert T. Williams, III, Imani Carr, Srishti Kishore along her students Harshini and Janani, Spektrums Afrikans, Shaun Millz, Todd Ellis, and April Showers.

GIVING THANKS BENEFIT Concert 2023 Performers

- Spanish singer Nivea Nieves, New York City
- Bharatnatyam dancer Srishti Kishore and students, Hillsborough
- Singer Shaun Millz, Glassboro
- Pianist Elizabeth Alfaro, Bedminster
- Romanian pianist Matei Varga, New York City
- R&B and contemporary gospel singer Todd Ellis, Philadelphia

Walker added, "Funding will also be used to support the agency's scholarship program. Through scholarships, Visions and Pathways helps formerly homeless youth continue their education and obtain employment so they can be self-sufficient."

The event will also recognize this year's two recipients of the Magic Money Kristina Lorelle Walker Empowerment Fund. The scholarship helps women, especially those affected by domestic violence, pursue an undergraduate degree. Walker, herself a victim of domestic abuse, was devoted to empowering women. The scholarship's name also has special significance. Walker died tragically in 2021 at age 25 in a motorcycle accident and was only able to be identified by a tattoo "magic" on her shoulder. This year's \$2000 scholarship recipients include Martha Hucks who is enrolled at Felician University and working towards a bachelor's degree in psychology, and Brittany Tom who is pursuing a master's degree in social work at Monmouth University.

Tickets are priced for a \$10.00 Love Offering. Children under 12 are free. Event registration/donations can be made at <https://one.bidpal.net/givingthanks23/welcome>



LIZ BLACK, personality at 107.5 FM and WBLS NY and 570 AM WMCA NY.

Magic Money and Sharing Joy Scholarship received over \$22,000 from Cherish International.



Anuradha (Rama) Angara from Cherish International has been assisting youth in Visions and Pathways programming with scholarship assistance since 2017. Cherish International volunteers assisted us by leading art classes, donating school supplies, and organizing hygiene packets to donate. “We have formed a great partnership and are incredibly grateful for Cherish International,” says Jennifer Amaya, Director of Outreach and

Prevention and Volunteer Coordinator. Cherish International, a registered 501(c)(3) focused on helping underprivileged women and children through education and an improved standard of living, granted \$12,413.46 to the Magic Money, Kristina Lorelle Walker Empowerment Fund and \$10,012.93 to the Joy Mathiowdis Scholarship Fund. Scholarship recipients will be announced on June 7.

• Magic Money, Kristina Lorelle Walker Empowerment Fund is used to support women who are pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree. Priority will be given to

women who have experienced domestic violence. A survivor herself, Kristina’s life course was impacted by domestic violence, and she was devoted to empowering women. Magic Money’s purpose is to be transformative. Although the student must be in good standing, academic excellence is not a factor.

• The Joy Mathiowdis Scholarship Fund support youth who exemplify Joy’s dedication and compassion to improving the lives of others, promoting civic engagement, and especially fighting discrimination of any kind.

Volunteer Spotlight



NIHAR PATEL

Nihar Patel

Our volunteers are critical to our success. We are so fortunate to have people like Nihar Patel, one of our key volunteers, who are willing to share their time and talents with us. Nihar

was introduced to V&P through a Board Member in 2020. Initially, he helped with community outreach. He then began working with the Fund Development and Marketing Committee where his expertise and commitment grew. He is now the lead for Fund Development and Marketing.

What drew you to V&P?

“A tour of the facility when I first joined helped me observe the effect V&P has on the youth. Seeing the direct impact made it easier to generate ideas to innovate fundraising and marketing efforts to raise V&P’s profile in the community.”

What is your favorite part of working at V&P?

“The people that I volunteer with and the work that they do is inspiring. Everyone has their own ideas and has the freedom to implement their ideas to help increase Visions and Pathways’ impact within the community”.

What is your personal goal to help move V&P’s mission forward?

“The goal is to increase collaboration and relevance of Visions and Pathways in the community. We would like to leverage partnerships with organizations that have

similar values as V&P to grow support within the community.”

What was your favorite event so far and why?

“The Annual 5K Walk and Run is my favorite event because I am an avid runner, so I love to participate in the event myself and be able to spread the word throughout the community. It is a great time to work out and fundraise for Visions and Pathways.”

Why is volunteering at V&P important to you?

“It is an incredible experience to be able to bring my experience and perspective in business to the table and help a local organization. Volunteering in Visions and Pathways has been a great experience because it shows what is possible when a group of individuals from different backgrounds are able execute successful events within the community to raise funds for a worthy cause.”



GABRIELLA PORCELLI

Gabriella Porcelli

V&P could not exist without the amazing volunteers who help us fulfill our mission. Meet Gabriella Porcelli. Gabby is a senior at Rutgers University, majoring in

social work, who learned of Visions and Pathways (V&P) through one of her classes.

What drew you to V&P?

“This was one of the first times I was volunteering at a nonprofit organization. I was drawn by how much they do for

youth and young adults in the community.” As a volunteer, Gabby helped organize donations, research housing and employment options for the youth and even wrapped presents around the holidays. Gabby extended her commitment to V&P by accepting an invitation to become an intern. “After volunteering for a few months, I knew I wanted to intern here so I could learn what they do in-depth and become part of something I care about.” Gabby now works as a case manager and life skills counselor intern where she can see firsthand the positive impact she has on the young men and women she works with.

What is your favorite part of working at V&P?

“My favorite part of working at V&P is working with youth. Being able to build a strong client-worker relationship and watching them grow is really rewarding.”

What is your personal goal to help move V&P’s mission forward?

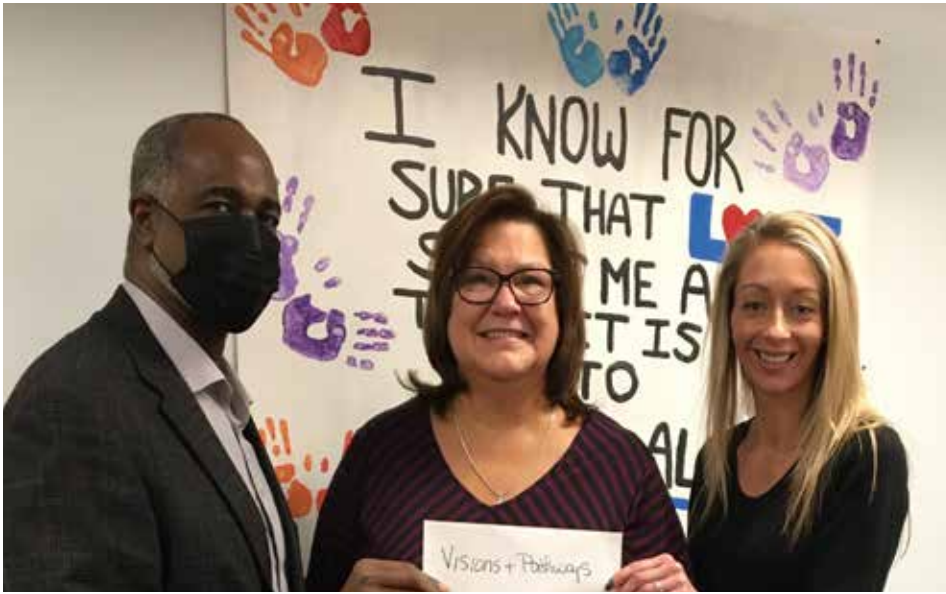
“My personal goal is to focus on going above and beyond for the residents and clients to ensure they feel supported throughout their experience here and self-sufficient to move forward.”

What was your favorite event so far and why?

“My favorite event was the Day of Beauty we held recently. Prior to interning here, I worked in the beauty industry. The ability to use my skills in both areas with the youth here, at an event that emphasized self-esteem and self-love, was fulfilling and fun! Working at Visions & Pathways is important to me because their core values align with mine. I find it important to work with and surround yourself with good-hearted, like-minded people like those at V&P”

Volunteer Spotlight

(continued from page 1)



FROM LEFT TO right David Walker, Bonnie Hodge and Katie Huber, Katie won the \$100 Visa Gift Card at Visions and Pathways Holiday Appreciation. Bonnie shared her love and prepared a Holiday Celebration Appreciation Breakfast and Lunch for all Visions and Pathways staff.



FROM LEFT TO right Dr. Julia Radwanski founder and owner of Vital Brain and Spine raised \$2,500 for Visions and Pathways accepting her donation is Katie Huber, Director of Behavioral Health and Adriana Gonzalez, Fund Development Associate.

Learn more about us . . .

Visions and Pathways provides abused, neglected, homeless, and missing youth with housing, a stable environment, and supportive services that help them to become self-sufficient. Since 1970, we have provided over 11,500 youth with safe shelter, food, clothing, and support services. Our program for vulnerable youth includes

- Brahma House residential crisis intervention program;
- Passages, My Place and Whitney House residential transitional-living programs;
- Prosperity independent-living skills education program;
- StreetSmart street and community outreach program;
- Transitional Learning Center for in-house education instruction;
- Bridge House and Village House, supportive-housing for aged-out youth, a Wellness Program (former Arts and Recreation Program), and the Transitions aftercare Program. The Loving Care Homes residence for homeless women.
- Scholarship: General, Meissner Memorial Fund, Warren, Sharing Joy and Magic Money.
- The Arman Roy Technology Center (ART Center) at Brahma.
- Pathways to Community Counseling (PCC) is an analytical, focused, goal oriented and needs based clinical intervention that addresses emotional and behavioral challenges.

In addition, V & P has an affiliation agreement with Newark's International Youth Organization (IYO), IYO has served Newark's highest need youth for almost 50 years.

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

“Writing from the heart, My Story.” R.N.

(continued from page 2)

mom said she knew I would get locked up and said she would never come to see me while I was in jail because of all the stress I put on her and the family. Hearing those words from her hurt me; it felt like I was stabbed in my heart and left there to die. I felt as if there was no one there to support me through my rough times. Then, why should I even bother trying to fix what is broken in my life? I had no one

there to help me lift myself back up and turn my life around to prove my parents wrong, to show them that I do have a bright future and that I can make something of myself. I thought it was impossible for me to change the way I was. I guess I was wrong because if you want something bad enough you do everything in your power to accomplish that goal, so never say anything is impossible.

Engage with Us

- Like our page on Facebook
- @visionsandpathways
- Like our page on Facebook
- Follow us on Twitter
@VisionsandPathwaysNJ
@StreetSmart_NJ
- Add us on Amazon Smile

You can make an impact: a gift in will or trust

Current transformational gifts can be made with appreciated securities, real estate, or IRA rollovers. Future planned gifts can include adding Visions and Pathways to a will, trust, or life insurance policy. We have opportunities to honor these gifts with naming opportunities. If you are interested in making a truly lasting gift using our legal name and Federal Tax ID, please contact Visions and Pathways Director of Finance Indumati Patel at ipatel@visionsandpathways.org.

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List of donors 2022 * As of May 15, 2023

THANK YOU to the companies, foundations, and service organizations that have made generous monetary contributions from January 2023 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
Anonymous
ARC Foundation
AT&T
Atlantic Health System
Bausch Lomb
Belle Meade Co-Op
Benadon Consulting, LLC
BlackRock Gives
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David Walker

2023 Volunteer Groups

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Nu Xi
Omega chapter
Arman Roy Foundation
Central Jersey Church of Christ
Community Baptist Church of Somerset
Evangel Chapel
Hillsborough High School - Basketball Team
Hillsborough High School - Lacrosse Team
Janssen
Johnson and Johnson
Junior League of Morristown

Kiwanis Club of Phillipsburg
Kiwanis Club of Somerset Hills
Kiwanis Club of Washington
Merck Foundation
PNANJ Somerset County
The Jewish Federation
Turner Construction Company
Watchung Hills High School - Baskets4Better
Woman's Club of Tewksbury
YMCA
Zarepath Christian Church

VISIONS AND PATHWAYS

IMPACT KIDS | GET INVOLVED!

"We help kids" find a **vision** and a **path** by giving safe housing, food and support services to at-risk and homeless NJ kids, ages 13+. **And we need your help!**

HOW?

Mentor Kids ● Our residents benefit from life skills, financial literacy, public speaking, cooking, conflict resolution, trades and other professional & life skills

Volunteer ● Paint a room, plant a garden, build benches, and attend events

Connect with us ●    

Operational Services ● Share your skills updating or managing our website, create or support a fundraiser, research/write grant requests, draft a brochure or write a blog. We've never found a professional skill that didn't help our kids!

Financial Support ● Financial donations, donations of a car or home, fund a scholarship or legacy /endowment, start a birthday Facebook or GoFundMe fundraiser, do a Memorial donation in lieu of sending flowers, and select Visions & Pathways on Smile.Amazon.com

Become an e-helper ● No time to volunteer and still want to help? Become an e-Helper by giving us your email address and a few times a year, we'll email you when a homeless teenager asks a special request not covered by our budget... Can I go to the prom, join the basketball team, can I get dress shoes for my job? Fulfilling these requests help youth living at Visions and Pathways get the same opportunities as their peers who live at home. E-helpers who can contribute let us know they're either sending a check or donating instantly online. There's no obligation to respond to each request, but every little bit helps. Email Adriana at agonzalez@visionsandpathways.org if you're interested in e-Helping.

You can involve your company too!

Ask us about volunteer days, mentoring, event sponsorship & "Adopt a Charity"!

Join us at Visionsandpathways.org, streetSMARToutreach.org or at our Bridgewater and Morristown locations

Losing Myself

Losing myself
Day by day
Hour by hour
Minute by minute

I give myself to the wrong people
Once my feelings are involved
The feelings from someone else
Are always unequal
These problems never get solved

I'm losing myself
Day by day
Hour by hour
Minute by minute

Lost my job
Lost my best friend
Feels like all I have left is getting robbed
When will this end

I'm not even tryna be dramatic
This is how I feel
Throughout this all I have a heart
That is elastic
But when will I believe that for real?

I'm losing myself
Day by day
Hour by hour
Minute by minute
—H.A

Closed Off

After all the experiences
I'm closed off
When will I come to my senses?
When will all these sad emotions stop?

I'm closed off
To stop getting hurt
I'm closed off
To protect my heart
I'm closed off
To keep my sanity

When I feel alone
I get stuck
I shut down
I'm like a stone

I'm closed off
It's sad to say
I can't open up
My thoughts are too much
I lost my mind

Poetry Written by H.A. 15 year-old

When There is Nowhere Else To Turn . . . We Give Homeless Youth A Home and Hopeful Future

Yes! I/We want to help youth at Visions and Pathways

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Email _____

My/Our gift is in honor of or in memory of:

Please send a notification (without amount) to:
Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Your tax-deductible donation provides operation funds for food, clothing, shelter, crisis intervention, counseling, basic education and independent-living skill education.

You can put your money to work immediately by making a secure gift online at www.visionsandpathways.org, or use one of the payments to follow.

Here's my heartfelt gift of: \$20. \$25. \$50.
 \$75. \$100. \$250. other _____

Check enclosed, payable to Visions and Pathways
 One-time or Monthly gift charged to my credit card
 VISA® MASTERCARD® AMEX®

Amount \$ _____ Exp. Date _____
Card No. _____
Signature _____

Employer's Matching Gift form enclosed.

** A gift of \$250 or more entitles you to a brick in our Walk of Wishes, a garden walkway at Visions and Pathways, as a permanent symbol of your generous support.*

What name or message would you like on your brick?
Up to 3 lines with a total of 15 letters and spaces on each line

S23 ----- ✂ -----

2023 Walk/Run Breaks Records



RUN AND WALK EVENT

Runners and walkers celebrated a quarter century of athleticism, fun,

great food, and the opportunity to support an organization that makes a difference in the lives of youth. The event raised \$33,000 for Visions and Pathways, a new record high. A big thanks goes to the Run/Walk Committee and its hard-working co-chairs, Joanne Machalaba, Veona Martin, and Fran Smith. A special thanks go to the Silent Auction Committee, which consists of Board President Emily Benadon, Audrey Madura, Darlene Sterritt, and Karen Yutsus. Sponsors include Benadon Consulting, Robert A. Bonavito, Brown and Brown Insurance, Dr. Gregory Hirsch, Lincoln Tech, Egan Wealth Advisors, Nisivoccia LLP, New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance, Paycom, and Zeus.

Community partners are: Affinity FCU, Mailbox Business Center, ShopRite, and Shake Shack.



Photo's Courtesy of Ken Alswang



Here is the Summer 2023 issue of your Visions and Pathways newsletter.

Thank you for investing in the future of our youth!

<<Sequence Number>><<Opt. Endorsement Line>>
<<Full Name>>
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<<Country>>

This year we will hold our 53rd Anniversary SPARK Gala Celebration

Visions and Pathways Spark! Gala is on the evening of Thursday, October 26 at the Bridgewater Marriott, “A Hopeful Future for Youth” is back. Last year’s event raised \$130,000 for Visions and Pathways’ programs. The gala is Visions and Pathways’ largest event. This year’s gala will be honoring Manisha Roy from The Arman N. Roy Foundation with the Dedicated Volunteer Award, Insmed Incorporated with the Corporate Partner Award, and Nihar Patel with the Community Service Volunteer Award.

- Manisha Roy, The Arman N. Roy Foundation provided financial support and created the Arman Roy Technology center located at the agency’s Brahma House facility. The Arman Roy Technology Center helps close the digital divide and ensures that our youth can readily access the latest technology.

- Insmed Incorporated provides financial support to our Prosperity Program, Scholarship, and covers costs associated with online professional skills and volunteer engagement. Visions and Pathways was selected as their 2023 Partner.

- Stephanie Durant, Former Board of Trustee President.

The gala is our biggest event of the year, where everyone comes together in support of our organization, and we recognize the company and individuals who are so critical to our success,” said David Walker. There will be dining, dancing, and an exciting silent auction that will feature art, wine, stays at luxury hotels, handbags, and gift certificates at local stores. Joanne Machalaba and Fran Smith are the event’s co-chairs. We are looking for sponsors; Tickets are \$160 per person and can be ordered through Visions and Pathways’ development associate, Adriana Gonzalez, agonzalez@visionsandpathways.org.



53rd Anniversary Spark! Gala

The Bridgewater Marriott
700 Commons Way, Bridgewater, NJ

Doors open promptly at:
6:00 PM THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26

Music, Open Bar, Cocktail, Dinner, Silent Auction

We hope to see you there!

RSVP by September 29
For any questions contact
agonzalez@visionsandpathways.org

VISIONS AND PATHWAYS