



**Let's  
Celebrate!**



# Leaving an Imprint: Celebrating 15 Years of Pathways Kingston

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to KCHC Pathways to Education's 15th anniversary retrospective magazine. We'd like to start by thanking the Kingston community for your continued support over the years. Thank you to all the families that we've worked with. Families trust our program to support their children and that is something we are forever grateful for. Thank you to current students and alumni for shaping our work into the thriving program that it is today. Thank you to every staff member who has selflessly given their energy to help our program grow. Your dedication to youth is the key reason why we have so many success stories to share.

In late 2019, our team had initial conversations around how we would celebrate our 10th anniversary in 2020. We wanted to set a strong vision for 2020 and gave the year a theme: "Best Year Ever!". Little did we know that in March of 2020 our lives would be completely turned around by the pandemic. In the shuffle and chaos, we missed the opportunity to celebrate our 10 years of service in Kingston.

**You will see grit, determination, and community resilience scattered throughout these pages.**

As we enter 2025, we're inviting you to join us as we celebrate our 15th anniversary. We will host opportunities throughout the year to connect and celebrate. This retrospective magazine is a collection of stories highlighting our work. Alumni have generously shared their stories. You will see grit, determination, and community resilience scattered throughout these pages. Welcome to the real "best year ever!"



Sincerely,  
Roger Romero  
KCHC Manager of Youth Services,  
Pathways to Education

# Avenues to Success: Reflections from One of Our First Champions



Wendy Vuyk

After many years as a youth employment counsellor, and seeing young people face countless challenges to find a meaningful career path, I became drawn to the Pathways to Education program. A needs determination process found that in some parts of North Kingston, high school students were twice as likely to drop out of high school than their peers in other parts of the city, and Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) was selected to run a local Pathways program. Education is a key social determinant of health, and KCHC recognized that by keeping kids in school, they would go on to live happier, healthier lives.

We launched Pathways in July of 2010. At first, both students and families were reluctant to join this new program as there was a lack of trust that the program could actually make a difference. Thanks to the commitment of the wonderful team of staff who established positive relationships with students and their parents in the Rideau Heights and Inner Harbour neighbourhoods, our first cohort of students signed on and we celebrated their

**KCHC recognized that by keeping kids in school, they would go on to live happier, healthier lives.**

graduation in June of 2014. Many of these students were the first in their families to graduate from high school. Today, many of those students are pursuing exciting careers and have started families of their own. This year, we saw our 500th student graduate! We have nearly doubled the graduation rate in the neighbourhoods we serve.

We have often been asked what is the “secret sauce” of Pathways? Why does it work? How is it different from other programs? While the program offers four significant pillars of support: academic tutoring, group mentoring, financial assistance, and the support of a Grad Connector, I believe the success lies in the positive relationships students establish with staff. The team fills the gaps that often exist between school, home, and community. For some students, Pathways is a place to get homework done with assistance of a tutor; for others it’s an opportunity to take part in experiential learning and safe risk-taking opportunities that help develop life and social skills. And for other students, the program offers a consistent, caring adult who offers support and guidance around the drama, and sometimes trauma, that high school life can bring. We also offer planning for life after high school, which has been a key aspect of the program, setting young people on wonderful career trajectories.

**Working with hundreds of students has taught us about trust, resiliency, and the value of unconditional support.**

As we have grown and evolved over the past 15 years, staff and students have learned that we are better together. Working with hundreds of students has taught us about trust, resiliency, and the value of unconditional support. Being the manager and then director of the Pathways program has been my dream job, and it has been a career highlight to witness the countless lives changed by this wonderful program and all who are part of it, staff, volunteers, donors, and students alike.

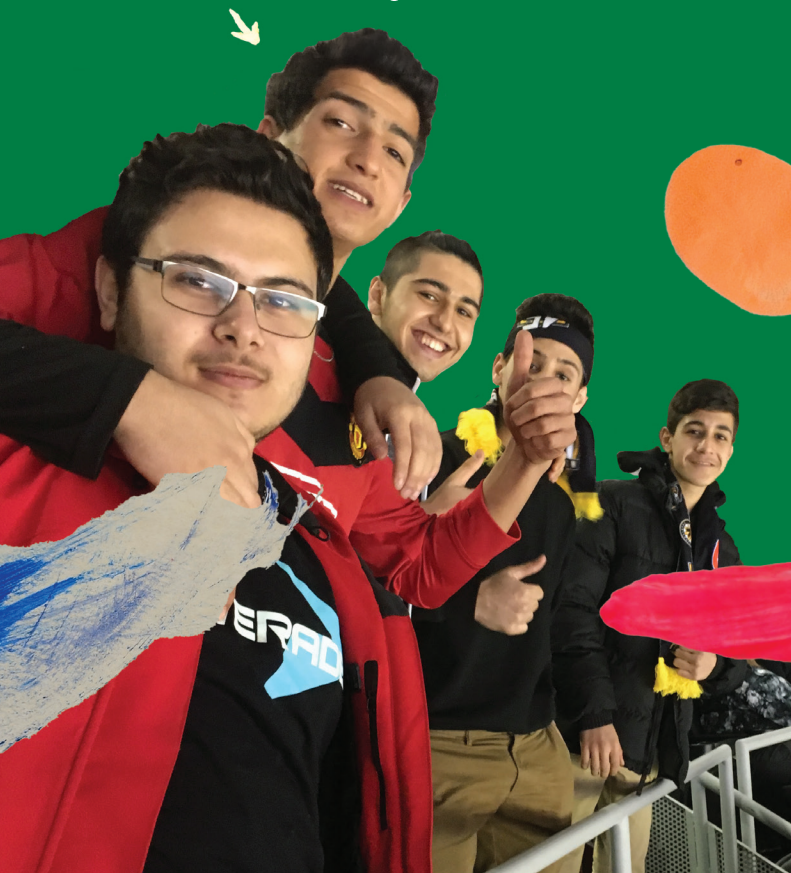
Wendy Vuyk is Director of Community Health at KCHC.

In conversation with Kate Archibald-Cross



“I believe the success lies in the positive relationships students establish with staff. The team fills the gaps that often exist between school, home and community.”

## Zak's story



### “They Drive Me”

‘Driven’ is the word that sums up Zakrya.

Zak is from Syria, immigrating to Canada with his family in 2016. “No English, no French, we don’t know anything at all in Canada,” he said, on the topic of the troubles he and his family faced when they first arrived. “Some people sent us to a French high school. Later on, someone also sent us to Pathways.”

It was Kara at Pathways who recommended Zak switch to an English school. “She said ‘go learn English, and then if you need French, go back. But you have to learn something.’” Changing schools, along with Pathways programming, helped Zak and his siblings improve their English. “For me, I wasn’t going for just to study. I was going to have more friends.”

The language barrier wasn’t the only obstacle he faced. In 2018, while Zak was still in high school, his father was hospitalized. “My father fell down in

school. Heart attack,” Zak recalls. “He was dancing, he was super happy. He was smiling, talking, and he just fell. I became very, very shocked; more than shocked.” Zak’s father passed away the following January.

“Kara tried to tell my mom ‘don’t worry about your children. We will take care of them.’” This happened at the height of exam season. Understandably, Zak couldn’t focus on his studies. “I have to support my family,” he said.

Making matters worse, a misunderstanding about a fight saw Zak taken out of school. “I was going to stop the fight,” Zak said. “I wasn’t know in Canada you cannot do this.”

Thankfully, Zak found support via his newfound community, including Pathways. They ensured he was back in school in time to graduate.

Zak graduated from Pathways Kingston in 2020, but graduating was only the first step of his journey. With so much on the line, Zak approached Kimco Steel. At the time, he had no certifications. “I said ‘Hey, I don’t speak English very well, my father’s just died a couple months ago, I need good future. I want to be truck driver.’” He convinced them to facilitate his certification process.

Today, he works as a driver at Kimco Steel, proudly holding an AZ licence, allowing him to drive virtually every truck in the industry. He does it all for his growing family. “My daughter is way beautiful,” he said. “She love me a lot, and I love her to death. I miss her every day at work. I feel I have a reason to live now.”

**“If Pathways was not there, I’m 100% sure everything will be different.”**

Zak attributes a large part of his success to Pathways. “If Pathways was not there, I’m 100% sure everything will be different.”

At Kimco, Zak has earned Driver of the Year, as well as an award for putting out a fire inside another driver’s truck. Despite his successes so far, Zak still looks forward. “I can say I finished 20% of what I want.” With the drive that’s carried him this far, the rest will surely follow.

By Jakob Crotty

# Laying Down Roots

“To be completely honest, looking back now, I didn’t really know what I wanted to do,” Alyx recalls, on the topic of her plans after high school.

Alyx belonged to Pathways Kingston’s first graduating cohort.

It was a journey fraught with challenges. At one point, Alyx changed schools. “There was a lot of bullying going on,” Alyx explained. The large size of her old high school created in-groups and out-groups, making it difficult for her to form a community.

Pathways provided some relief. “Meeting throughout the week with Pathways and going over everything with them about it, they helped me out a lot.” The continued presence of Pathways staff who already knew her story ensured a smooth transition. “That helped me a lot, not trying to explain myself all over again.” Alyx got a fresh start at her new school. “I met a lot of nice people. They weren’t as cliquey, so everybody knew everybody.”

**“People are there for you, to help you.”**

Flourishing at her new school, Alyx was still unsure about her future plans. “I took to being a mechanic because it was a fun hobby to have. I thought making a career out of it would be super fun.”

Pathways arranged a co-op for Alyx at a local auto shop. “It was a lot of fun. It was just like a tiny little mom-and-pop run shop. So, they thought of me as like a second daughter.” She is on good terms with them even now. “They still call me on Christmas and on holidays. I’ve watched their grandkids grow up to be bigger kids now; it’s really nice to have them.” The shop’s proximity to her Pathways site also made things easier. “Once I was done my co-op I just walked right to the program.”

This experience motivated Alyx to become a mechanic. “There was a couple different colleges I could have went to for that trade,” she said. “They were able to help me pick which colleges were closest, and Loyalist in Belleville was the closest.”

“Pathways actually helped me write an essay for a grant. I used the fact that I’m a female trying to go into a male-dominated trade. I ended up getting the grant, which was really, really helpful.”

Alyx credits Pathways for aiding her in overcoming other day-to-day issues. “I was a procrastinator in high school, like all of high school.” She remembers Pathways volunteers encouraging her to shake the habit through responses like “okay, we know that there’s something that’s due, what are you holding out on us?”

“People are there for you, to help you. That was really beneficial for me.”

Alyx currently works as a Service Advisor at a mechanic shop in Kingston. She’s happy to take on a more service-oriented role in her industry. “Yes, you’re getting paid to work on somebody’s car, but it’s more fun when it’s your own car.”

Now, Alyx has a family of her own and is open to registering them in Pathways. “I have two stepsons. One is seventeen, the other one is ten, and then I have my own little five-year-old. So, if there’s something for her that I can enroll her in, I absolutely would.”

By Jakob Crotty



# Our Journey (as Told Through Our Hoodies)

In our first year, we had a surplus advertising budget. To benefit our students, we sought a way to use that money for more than just a commercial. Hoodies allowed us to ‘advertise’ while also giving our students something they needed—warm winter clothes.

Pathways hoodies have since become a symbol throughout the community. New waves are distributed every 2-3 years to ensure each student can receive one.

## 2001

Pathways to Education is born out of a vision from Toronto’s Regent Park Community Health Centre

## 2008

Community needs assessment determines Rideau Heights and Inner Harbour neighbourhoods would benefit from Pathways due to graduation rates of around 40%

## 2009

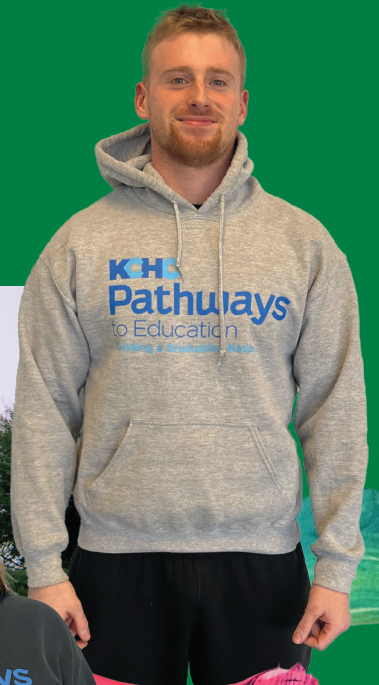
After much negotiation, KCHC is awarded a Pathways site in Kingston’s north end

## 2010

Petra Hanson is hired with the task of enrolling 50 Grade 9 students

Wendy Vuyk is chosen as the first Program Manager

With no permanent location yet, the office is situated in a social housing unit adjacent to KCHC



## 2011

KCHC refurbishes an abandoned plaza unit on Weller Ave. to become the program’s second office. The plaza is renamed “Rising Heights”

Enrollment strengthens due to dedicated physical space

## 2013

KCHC purchases “Rising Heights” and adjacent vacant land to build KCHC’s flagship site

Pathways offices move to the basement of St. Matthew’s Church on Weller Ave. during the build

## 2014

KCHC building on Weller Ave. is completed

Office and programming space permanently moved to the new building Pathways celebrates its first graduating class

Post-secondary retention rate for first graduating class is only 15%. Staff rally to find solutions



## 2025

Pathways celebrates 15 years in Kingston

Anniversary hoodies coming soon!



## 2024

Pathways celebrates its 11th graduating cohort. Total graduates of the program surpass 500

Pathways Canada reports that the annual graduation rate is 74%. An increase from 40% in 2010.

Pathways reaches \$1M endowment goal



## 2023

TRTLs are awarded CRI's Community Resilience in Action award—the first Canadian group to receive the honour



Pathways to Education  
Kingston Community Health Centres  
Centres de santé communautaire de Kingston

## 2019

Pathways views the documentary "Paper Tigers". Pathways embarks on professional development journey related to all things "trauma informed"



A grant is submitted to CFKA to attend a training opportunity in Walla Walla, Washington in early 2020.

4 staff become TRTLs (Trauma Responsive Team leads)

## 2020

Pathways Kingston gears up to celebrate its 10th anniversary

Global pandemic shuts down the world. Programming pivots to online learning

TRTLs postpone travel but invest resources to further their education and certification

## 2021

TRTLs launch "Teach Resilience" to train others in the trauma responsive movement. All proceeds supplement Pathways' core budget

A group of community supporters called "The Cabinet", led by Jo-Anne Brady, start fundraising a \$1 million endowment with CFKA to fund the FAR program

Rotary Cataraqui-Kingston offers 3-year bridge funding to further maintain the FAR program

Pathways hires its first alumni for a full-time, permanent position



## 2015

Pathways submits its first grant application to CFKA to create alumni transition supports. Pathways FAR (Facilitator of Alumni Relations) is born

# Award-winning Pathways Training Program Expands into the Community

An innovative, trauma-informed training program developed by a team from Pathways to Education Kingston has received international recognition and is now being shared with other organizations and agencies in the community.

Called Teach Resilience, the approach is adapted from a successful U.S. initiative that links adversity in childhood to long-term health and social outcomes. Focusing on relationships and connections, it redefines “problem behaviour” in young people as a communication of unmet needs.



“Instead of punishment, it’s necessary to determine how these needs can be met, and help the student engage positively with the rest of the class,” says Garry Castle, one of three certified teachers who are Trauma Responsive Team Leads (TRTLs) at Pathways. “I think I was operating with a similar lens before, and this research provided scientific backing for that approach. ‘Connection before correction’ is something I’ve come to embrace!”

While Garry’s background is community-based outdoor and experiential education, the other TRTLs – Kara Fry and Stephanie Wight – have each taught in both traditional and non-traditional settings. All three are excited about the impact of the Teach Resilience approach on their students.

“As Pathways started to go on this trauma-informed journey, it connected so many dots for me about what’s important in a classroom, and my overall philosophy of teaching,” Stephanie reflects. “I’m learning why the things I’ve been doing are working. We’ve invested so much in building those relationships and we don’t see the same kinds of negative behaviours now.”

Other community agencies and institutions – especially in education, health care and social services – are paying attention to the successful Pathways model, notes Program Manager

Roger Romero. “When we decided to share our experience and expertise with others through training and seminars, we discussed potential marketing and advertising tools.” As it turned out, however, word of mouth had already created a demand.

“Fees charged to other agencies for our services are now used to fund Pathways land-based and experiential learning initiatives, plus things like providing nourishment for students who arrive hungry,” Roger continues. “It’s a true social enterprise!”

Program Assistant Zoe McDonald reports that more than 1,500 people from the region’s educational, social service and community groups have attended Teach Resilience training sessions, while more than 300 have connected with the program through its “cups of coffee” outreach initiative. In 2023, the Pathways team was recognized by the U.S.-based Community Resilience Initiative (CRI) with their Community Resilience in Action Award – the first Canadian group to be so honoured.

**“It connected so many dots for me about what’s important in a classroom.”**

By introducing this revolutionary approach to the wider community, the Teach Resilience Team hope that graduating Pathways students will encounter similar support when they transition to post-secondary education, where their success rates haven’t been as high.

“We’re learning that people aren’t born resilient,” says Roger. “It has to be taught. Neuroscience doesn’t support the adage that individuals must ‘pick themselves up by their boot straps’ ... everyone needs the help of supportive systems to succeed.”

Further information about the trauma-supportive training programs and services offered through Pathways may be found at: [teachresilience.ca](http://teachresilience.ca)

By Nancy Dorrance



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN ACTION AWARD

Earth Builders  
TR



**KFL&A RESILIENCE SYMPOSIUM:  
NAVIGATING ADVERSITY THROUGH THE POWER OF  
COMMUNITY**

**OCTOBER 25-27, 2023**

# Investing in Youth: The Community Foundation's Role in the Success of Pathways

As Pathways to Education Kingston approaches its 15th anniversary in 2025, its profound impact on local youth is undeniable. The Community Foundation for Kingston and Area has played a critical role in this success, providing essential funding to support Pathways in empowering vulnerable youth to graduate from high school and achieve success beyond.

Countless young people have overcome barriers and unlocked their full potential through this partnership, paving the way for brighter futures.

**“We believe the well-being of youth in our community is a collective responsibility.”**

## A Strong Partnership's Beginnings

The partnership between the Community Foundation and Pathways was founded on a shared vision: to bring lasting, meaningful change to Kingston's youth. Tina Bailey, former Community Foundation Executive Director, recognized the program's potential. She saw an opportunity to not only break the cycle of poverty but open doors for at-risk youth. In 2019, a volunteer fundraising committee deepened the Pathways partnership by establishing a permanent endowment fund at the Community Foundation. This would provide sustainable annual operating grants for Pathways. With a goal of raising \$1 million by 2023, the community's generosity exceeded expectations, ensuring that Pathways Kingston's transformative work can continue for years to come.

## Building Resilience Together

“We believe the well-being of youth in our community is a collective responsibility,” explains Bridget Glassco, ACEs & Resilience Coalition of KFL&A (ARC) and Project Manager at the Community Foundation. “Pathways shares this vision, and as a funder, we're proud to invest in organizations that help young people thrive and build long-term resilience.”

At the heart of the Community Foundation and Pathways collaboration is a shared commitment to building community resilience. Both organizations believe resilience is fostered through supportive relationships within families, communities, and between children and caring adults.

## Long-Term Impact on Students

Pathways to Education's core mission is to help youth graduate from high school and successfully transition to post-secondary education, the skilled trades, or employment. With the Community Foundation's continued support, Pathways provides trauma-informed services such as tutoring, mentoring, and financial literacy programs. These services not only help students succeed academically but also foster a sense of belonging.

**“Real success is in the long-term impact.”**

“P2E's graduation rates are remarkable,” says Stacy Kelly, Executive Director of The Community Foundation. “But the real success is in the long-term impact: helping young people access education and meaningful employment, while nurturing feelings of personal accomplishment and value they will carry into adulthood.”

By Krista Johnston

# Charlee's story



## A Promising Future

Charlee's Pathways journey had a rougher start than most. Her Grade 9 year took place in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, so a lot of programming was conducted online. "I didn't know anyone," Charlee recalls about her first year at Pathways.

The pandemic didn't just shape Charlee's experience in Pathways. "I was pretty bummed about it," she remembers. "I was a sporty person." The necessity of being locked inside meant that Charlee missed out on a lot of the experiences her older sister taught her to expect about high school. Yet despite a "weird" first year, Charlee made it through because of "people from Pathways reaching out."

As time went on, the situation normalized. Pathways returned to in-person programming starting from her Grade 10 year. "I eventually made some friends in the program," she recalls. On top of that, Charlee built relationships with Pathways staff

as well. "My main person is Steph. Her and I really click."

With lockdown restrictions easing, Charlee got the chance to embrace her sporty side. "At my programming, Garry was always there, saying 'Hey, do you want to get a game going?' I always wanted to participate, but I had to get my math done." Nevertheless, Charlee found time to be physically active and participate after study sessions. "There was always something fun to do."

Currently, Charlee is a Concurrent Education student at Queen's University in her second year. "I knew for a while I wanted to teach. Queen's was my first choice." Her aim is to teach English

**"There was always something fun to do."**

to high schoolers. "I was always the typical person who liked to read." Even with that goal in mind, Charlee's road map to reach it was unclear.

Charlee is the first member of her family to enroll in university. But getting in was only the first hurdle. Charlee's studies are supported by a remarkable scholarship. "It's called Promise Scholars," she explains. Designed for students graduating in the Kingston area, this program provides funding for first-generation students like Charlee. Only five are available each year. "Pathways is the way I found out about this scholarship." Against the odds, Charlee received one of the spots.

Adapting to university life proved another challenge. "It was a lot. A lot more drastic than I thought it would be." On her own for the first time and living in residence, Charlee had to adjust fast. Although her parents had a lot of faith in her, she couldn't always come to them with questions. Pathways provided a space for her to do that. "It was nice, because I knew I could text them," Charlee recalls. "Even if they didn't know the answer, they could find out."

Charlee knows that changing times mean there's uncertainty ahead in her profession. "Times have changed. How much more is this going to change by the time I get there?" she wonders. Even so, she's confident she has the tools to navigate those changes and is hopeful about her own future classroom. "I'm optimistic," she says. "I think I've got this."

By Jakob Crotty

## Editor's Note

Pathways and I go way back. I've always been an introvert; going into high school, my mindset was simply 'just get through it.' But Pathways brought me out of my shell and taught me to embrace a more social side of myself. I'm still a quiet person, but I've learned not to shirk from interacting with others like before.

When I graduated from Pathways in 2015, I was asked to be the valedictorian at the graduation ceremony at St. Lawrence College. At the time, I thought "why me?" I didn't want the spotlight on myself. But getting over those nerves was important, and deciding to accept was worth it.

I went on to pursue a degree in English Language & Literature at Queen's University, going on to earn a Master's degree in the same subject in 2020.

I still tutor at Pathways, where I hope to pass on the same lessons that were instilled in me. In sharing the stories of Pathways alumni like me, I aim to show the full scope of what those lessons can teach.



Thank you, Pathways Kingston, and here's to 15 more years of stories!

Jakob Crotty  
Editor-in-Chief



### On the Artwork:

From the sparkler on the cover to the splotches in the margins, all the finger paintings in this magazine were created by Pathways students and staff.



Pathways Kingston is situated on the ancestral lands of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. There is also a significant connection to Inuit, Metis and other First Nations from across Turtle Island. Indigenous youth are overrepresented in high school dropout rates. It is our responsibility to work with Indigenous partners in order to break down the systematic barriers that exist within colonial educational structures.

## Ways to Donate

Cheques graciously received at:  
263 Weller Avenue Unit 4, K7K 2V4  
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Thank you for the support!



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This magazine  
is designed by  
Nash Paul D'Souza