



March 2020

## In His Own Words

### Now I Run!

*by Thomas O'Shea*

Before I came to Pathway Homes, I was crawling. After coming to Pathway Homes, I began to walk and now I am running both figuratively and literally. Sadly, for many years I was crawling. When I was six years old, I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. At that time, sugar levels were tracked through urine tests that took 48 hours to provide results. I was raised by my grandparents growing up and my treatment was largely trial and error as they estimated the medications.



*Thomas pictured here with his art in Summer of the Arts exhibit at the Lorton Workhouse Arts Center in July.*

It was a daily battle to monitor and effectively treat my diabetes. As I grew up, the monitoring improved somewhat with the finger prick blood tests and more recently with the creation of continuous glucose monitors. However, most of my childhood focused on managing my diabetes.

In my early twenties, I began to find it hard to concentrate and I felt like my “brain” wasn’t working right. Human beings are faced with a multitude of decisions every day and our logical “left” brain battles with our emotional right brain. My brain wasn’t processing these decisions correctly. I found it increasingly more difficult to focus and I was experiencing negative thoughts. I had always been a good student, an avid reader and worked as a librarian for many years. However, I began to have trouble functioning at work and in social situations. Eventually, I was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder-bipolar type. Over the course of my lifetime, the symptoms of my mental illness and my diabetes made my journey a difficult one—I was crawling.

I ended up homeless. I loved to read and would sit in restaurants reading my books until I was asked to leave. I lived in my car and anywhere I could find a spot. I had no money for diabetes medicine nor for medicine to treat my mental illness. One day I had reached my limit and was laying in my car on the side of the road. A police officer came to my car. I told him I needed help. He got me to crisis care and I spent the

next several years in and out of hospitals stabilizing my diabetes and mental health symptoms--I was crawling.

About four years ago, I came to Pathway Homes. I began to walk. Pathways recognized my intellect and helped me to develop skills so I could manage my physical and mental health on my terms. I have acquired tools to help me understand the structure of my recovery. I use scientific conceptualizations to help me manage my symptoms for both my diabetes and mental health. I work with the nurse and staff to make good nutritional choices and I take anti-psychotic drugs to stabilize my mood and increase my focus. I have room and time to think. I go to the park, the movies and holiday parties. I participate in self-esteem and art groups. For the last two years, I have exhibited in Pathway Homes Summer of the Art Exhibit. In December, I spoke to a group of Prince William County community leaders about my journey so I can help others--I am running.

I recently applied for a copyright on an invention I have been working on for several years called the Diabetes Ring. It cost \$169 to apply for this 70-year copyright and in addition to working on this invention, I have been saving funds to make this application. I am anxiously awaiting copyright approval which takes between five and six months. In addition, I continue to work on my business plan and trilogy of my journey with type 1 diabetes and mental illness. My passion for the Diabetes Ring came from my desire to provide better options for those managing the symptoms of their diabetes.

These efforts position me well for a return to the work force. I recently completed the Social Security Ticket to Work program and look forward to joining the work force again. This is the figurative part of running! As I continue to monitor my nutrition, exercise and can meet with my doctor regularly, I now literally walk frequently and have begun running as well. I feel so much better and am more focused allowing me to concentrate on those activities that help me continue to reach my goals—I am sprinting!

## A Message from the President & CEO

Pathways is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year! As a premier non-profit agency, we must stay abreast of changes not only in how and what services are provided, but in informatics and data analytics, which continue to change how integrated behavioral healthcare is provided and evaluated.

We must embrace technological advancements, innovations, and new tools in order to meet future demands of healthcare and housing, and to efficiently provide these services within an equity lens.

So, as we celebrate 40 years of serving our neighbors in the northern Virginia community, please join us to proclaim housing as a right not a privilege. Join us also to re-affirm that individuals with mental illnesses and co-occurring disabilities can and do recover! We know this because we have seen it in our program outcomes for four decades and counting.

At the same time, we cannot do this critical work without your support, and that of our many community partners. Our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration event on May 7<sup>th</sup> would therefore be incomplete without you. We opened our doors 40 years ago as a result of a coalition of caring and passionate family and community members like you, coming



together. From that first day until now, we continue to benefit from this committed coalition whose support is critical in helping the individuals we serve to realize their individual potential and varied dreams.

During our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration event, we welcome you to join us in recognizing three such persons who have epitomized passion and tenacity in helping individuals in the community, including those served by Pathway Homes. If you receive this Newsletter, you have been part of our legacy and, on behalf of our Board of Directors, residents, and staff, thank you for your ongoing commitment and generosity. We look forward to seeing you on Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. at the Waterford Fair Oaks.



Sylisa Lambert-Woodard, EdD, LCSW, LSATP, MAC

*“Pathway Homes embodies the spirit of recovery: embracing an attitude of hope, self-determination and partnering with each individual on their personal journey toward achieving self-fulfillment and realizing their dreams.*

*We fulfill our mission by making available to individuals with mental illness and co-occurring disabilities a variety of non-time-limited, affordable housing, and services to enable them to realize their individual potential.”*

**- Pathway Homes Mission**

**40th Year Announcement**



**PATHWAY HOMES, INC.**  
Supportive Residential Mental Health Services

# 40th Anniversary Celebration

Annual Steps to Pathways Breakfast

Save The Date

MAY 7, 2020

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM

THE WATERFORD  
FAIR OAKS, VA

For the past 40 years, Pathways has been committed to our mission of embodying the spirit of recovery: embracing an attitude of hope, self-determination and partnering with each individual on their personal journey toward achieving self-fulfillment and realizing their dream.

We fulfill our mission by making available to individuals with mental illness and co-occurring disabilities a variety of non-time limited housing and services to enable them to realize their individual potential.

For sponsorship information or any questions,

please contact Leslie Wadler at

[lwadler@epiphanyproductions.com](mailto:lwadler@epiphanyproductions.com)

or call (703)683-7500

Pathway Homes is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

## Resident Holiday Party



*Consumer Advisory Council with Pathway's CEO, Sylisa Lambert-Woodard, and Development Director, Anna Smith, at the Resident Holiday*

In December, our residents came out to The Church of the Good Shepherd to join us in our Annual Resident Holiday Party! We spent the evening dining on delicious food, making silly faces at the photo booth, marveling at our karaoke singers, busting moves out on the dance floor, and cheering on our raffle winners. It was a night of friends and pure merriment!

Congrats to our raffle winners and thank you to the residents that blessed our ears with your lovely karaoke and poetry readings!



Thank you to Care First and others in the community including Denise Miller who volunteered your time and brought the holiday cheer to our venue. We also can't forget to thank the residents that brought their best dance moves out onto the dance floor! The Cha-Cha Slide was not ready for us! We cannot wait for such a fun-filled night with our residents in the 2020 Holiday season.

## Thank You Donors!



strategies that provide tax benefits.

On February 21st we held our Annual Donor Recognition Luncheon to thank our board, the members of our Giving Society and our breakfast table captains for their support in 2019 with the gift of delicious food and knowledge!

Thank you to special guest speaker, Matthew D. Shriver of Alexander Randolph Advisory, Inc., for educating our guests about charitable giving

## VHDA



When homes are affordable and accessible to jobs, good schools and transportation, everyone benefits. Individual lives are improved and communities as a whole grow stronger. VHDA was created in 1972 by the General Assembly to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing. We carry out this mission by working in public-private partnerships with local governments, community service organizations, lenders, Realtors, developers and many others.

We provide mortgages for first-time homebuyers, as well as financing for apartment communities and neighborhood revitalization efforts. We offer free homebuyer classes, support housing counseling, and help people with disabilities and the elderly make their homes more livable.

We also administer the federal Housing Choice Voucher and Housing Credit programs in Virginia. VHDA is self-supporting and receives no state taxpayer dollars to fund our programs. Instead, we raise money in the capital markets, and we contribute a significant portion of our net revenues each year to help meet Virginia's most difficult housing needs.

*Pathway Homes thanks VHDA for sponsoring our 2019 Help the Homeless Walk. One of the benefits of that sponsorship is the opportunity to share their critical work in the community in our newsletter.*

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