

Member news & Notes



NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: **Pathways to Success**

BY CLAIRE ARMANN

» In Sussex County there are 24 pockets of poverty where children are underserved and at-risk. Specifically, students in their ninth-grade year of high school are most at risk to drop out. This is a vital year for students, especially those from an underserved area where there is

a lack of role models and resources. It's at this point that students can join Pathways to Success.

Pathways to Success is a nonprofit organization that offers guidance, after school assistance and programs for students who are at risk of dropping out. The program serves

over 300 students in Seafood High School, Milford High School, Sussex Technical, and Cape Henlopen High School. Students enter the five-year program, usually as ninth graders, through the recommendation from their dean. Pathways has a 98% graduation rate and 96% of those

Member news & Notes

“A child doesn’t necessarily struggle in school because they’re poor, but because their needs aren’t being met, and that’s part of what we do. When we invest time in them, we start to see that child make progress.” — Fay Blake, founder, Pathways to Success

students enter the military, find full-time employment or enroll in a college or certificate program.

The program coordinators and staff at Pathways meet students where they are to help them grow, broaden their view of the world and provide support. Pathways employees aim to serve students in whatever way they need. If a student needs someone to babysit their child so they can take an exam, a Pathways employee will provide childcare. Or if a student gets in trouble with law enforcement and needs an advocate because a parent cannot be reached, a Pathways employee provides the support the student needs.

Fay Blake, founder of Pathways to Success, started out at a banking company where she eventually became the first African-American female vice president. Sussex County born and raised, Blake knows first hand the struggles that underserved children face when getting an education. In these pockets of poverty, basic needs are often not met.

Two years after Blake left the banking industry, she founded Pathways in hopes of creating a more positive experience for at-risk students and helping them to achieve success.

One of the core mottos that Pathways utilizes is CARE, which stands for



Consistent, Authentic, Respect and Empowerment. Through affirmation, honesty, and stability, Pathways employees connect with their students and provide guidance.

“A child doesn’t necessarily struggle in school because they’re poor, but because their needs aren’t being met, and that’s part of what we do. When we invest time in the, we start to see that child make progress.” said Blake.

One Pathways student, Kenya N. said, “Pathways helped me to become the person that I am today. Pathways helped me with homework, finding a job, and it has helped me with many other life skills like self-respect, respect for others, accountability, and college preparation. I am very thankful for Pathways and the many opportunities it has afforded me.”

Pathways only has seven employees, including four program coordinators that work in each of the schools served by Pathways. All the employees invest time and resources into their students. If a student misses three days of class, a Pathways employee will go to their house and check in on them. In the middle of the night, if a student needs someone and has no one else to call, a Pathways employee will go to them. No matter what the student is going through, they know that they can depend on Pathways to support them through every step.

“I believe that we all have greatness in us,” Blake said. “And I believe that our circumstances shouldn’t define who we are.”