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# Pathways, a Family Tradition

## THREE GENERATIONS OF IMPACT



Za'via and Za'viyan  
Third Generation Pathways

**IN THE HEART OF IMMOKALEE**, Pathways Early Education Center serves as a beacon of hope and opportunity. For the Hughes family, it represents a critical foundation, underscoring the transformative power of education in their three-generation journey of resilience and success.

Valencia Thomas first walked through the doors of Pathways in 1993, a young single mother searching for a nurturing environment for her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Johnerra, and her eight-month-old son, Jernell. Little did Valencia know that this initial step would become the catalyst for a new chapter in both her life and the lives of her children. At Pathways, she not only found a safe haven for her little ones but also a calling that would shape her

future. Starting as a teacher in the infant classroom, Valencia poured her heart into her work, driven by a passion to give every child the kind of start in life they deserved. Over the years, her dedication and talents saw her climb the ranks, eventually becoming the director of the center. The opportunity to mold young minds was more than a job; it was a mission, one that Valencia carried with her even as she continues her career in childcare today.

Johnerra, whose earliest memories are intertwined with the vibrant classrooms of Pathways, blossomed under its care. The early education and nurturing environment laid a solid foundation for her future



Lariah and Kemora



Lariah and Kemora (2022)



Jernell

academic endeavors. From high school to earning a bachelor's degree from Edison State College, Johnerra's path was illuminated by the teachings and values instilled in her during those formative years at Pathways. Today, she serves as a Program Manager at the Collier County Parks and Recreation, a testament to the educational legacy that began with her mother's bold step into that early education center.

For Jernell, Pathways was not only a place of learning but also a community that fueled his passion for basketball. A cherished gift, a basketball from donors Pat and Bob, was a spark that ignited his athletic dreams. With each bounce of the ball, Jernell forged a future that took him to Upper Iowa University, securing a basketball scholarship and earning a bachelor's degree in communication studies. His journey then led him to play in professional leagues overseas. Now back home, he dedicates himself to coaching young athletes, paying forward the support and encouragement he once received.

Larell, the eldest daughter, followed in her mother's footsteps, teaching at Pathways and ensuring that her children had the same strong start. Her daughters, Lariah and Kemora, thrived under the same roof where their grandmother once guided so many young minds. Currently attending Immokalee High School, Lariah dreams of a career in criminal justice and is already making strides by training as an emergency dispatcher, while also considering a future as a Marine. Kemora, driven by a desire to heal and help others, is in the FSU School of Medicine's SSTRIDE Program, aiming to graduate high school with her nursing credentials. Their aspirations are seeds nurtured by the educational soil of Pathways.

Now, as Larell's youngest, twins Za'via and Za'viyan, continue their early education at Pathways, a new chapter unfolds. These siblings, meeting and exceeding benchmarks for kindergarten readiness, are a testament to the power of consistent, quality early education.

The Hughes family's story is one of legacy—of a cycle of giving and



Lariah and Kemora (2008)



Valencia and Jernell (1996)



Family of Jernell  
Johnerra, Larell, Valencia, Lariah, and Kemora (2010)



Family of Za'viyan  
Johnerra, Kemora, Larell, Lariah, Valencia, and Za'via (2024)

The Hughes family's story is one of legacy—of a cycle of giving and receiving, of learning and teaching, of dreams realized and new dreams born.



Andrea and Johnerra

receiving, of learning and teaching, of dreams realized and new dreams born. It is a story that embodies the mission of Pathways Early Education Center, a beacon of possibility in Immokalee, where the opportunity gap closes with each generation, one child at a time. To you, the generous Quail West members who support Pathways, know that your contributions over the years are not just an investment in education, but in stories like these—stories that inspire, uplift, and transform communities.



Read the  
Pathways 2024  
Annual Report