PATHWAYS
EARLY EDUCATION CENTER
of Immokalee



2025



Jason and Daphne, Future Doctors
Photo by Brian Tietz
Physician's Regional Healthcare System

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OUR MISSION IS TO CLOSE THE OPPORTUNITY GAP BY PROVIDING INDIVIDUALIZED, HIGH-QUALITY COGNITIVE, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION TO CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO 5 YEARS.

2025

TOGETHER, WE THRIVE

What an extraordinary year it has been. As we reflect on the past twelve months, we are filled with immense gratitude for your belief in our mission. Your unwavering support has been the driving force behind every milestone we've celebrated and every child we've empowered. Because of you, we are not just changing beginnings; we are changing everything that follows.

This year, our community came together in a remarkable way. With your partnership, we successfully completed our ambitious $2.25M Growth Campaign, exceeding our goal to raise an incredible $2.4M. Together, we also achieved our stretch goal of $3M, a testament to what we can accomplish when we unite for the children of Immokalee.

The impact of your generosity is evident in the bright, smiling faces of our students. We are incredibly proud to share that 100% of our VPK students who have been with us for two or more years are now kindergarten-ready. This year's assessments show significant growth, with a 24% increase in literacy skills and a 21% jump in cognitive abilities. These are not just numbers; they represent children discovering the joy of learning, ready to step confidently into their futures.

Your support has also enabled us to invest in our dedicated teachers through enhanced professional development, ensuring they have the resources they need to provide the best possible education. This investment has fostered a nurturing and stable environment for our children to thrive. Furthermore, your generosity has positioned us to make vital infrastructure improvements, ensuring our students will have safer and more engaging playgrounds where they can play, explore, and simply be children.

This year has been about building a stronger foundation—for our students, our teachers, and our center. While we celebrate these accomplishments, we know our work is far from over. The journey to ensure every child has the opportunity to fulfill their potential continues, and your partnership remains essential. The following pages offer a deeper look into the progress you have made possible and the lives you have touched.

Thank you for being a vital part of the Pathways family and for investing in the promise of a brighter future.

In partnership,

James J. Hummer
Board President

Brandon Dowdy
Chief Executive Officer

THE PROMISE OF SOL

In 2020, Isabel Franco's world shrunk. The stable life she had built for her family crumbled when she lost her job during COVID. Suddenly, she and her young daughter, Sol, faced an uncertain future, and the dream of a better life seemed out of reach. With no income, quality early education for Sol felt impossible. But Isabel refused to give up on her daughter's future—or her own.

That's when she found Pathways. It wasn't just a school; it was a lifeline and a partner in her quiet promise to give her child the best life possible. With affordable, high-quality early education for her daughter, a new path opened for both of them. While Sol was learning in a safe, nurturing environment, Isabel had time to rebuild. She started working full-time and enrolled in school to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). The weight on her shoulders began to lift, replaced by a renewed sense of purpose.

While Isabel poured over textbooks, Sol was blossoming. At Pathways, she wasn't just playing; she was discovering a love for learning and the confidence to navigate her world. The shy toddler who first walked through the doors grew into a bright, self-assured little girl who learned to share, solve problems, and be a friend.



Their family grew with the arrival of her second child, Cielo. Eager to give him the same strong start Sol received, Isabel enrolled him at Pathways. From his first day, Cielo was met with the same warmth and support that had transformed his sister's early years.

In 2024, Sol graduated from our program, fully prepared and excited for kindergarten. The transition was seamless. She thrived in her new school, ending her kindergarten year with straight "O's" for Outstanding.

Today, Sol is excelling in first grade, and Cielo, now three, is following in his sister's footsteps at Pathways. Isabel has remarried and is pursuing her dream of becoming a Physician Assistant while balancing her growing family. She and her husband recently welcomed their third child, Yonathan, who joined the Pathways community this year in our infant classroom.

Their journey is a powerful reminder of what happens when hope meets opportunity. This resilient family, faced with challenge after challenge, found strength in a helping hand and the unwavering support of our community. That support didn't just change their present—it ignited dreams for the future, especially for the children.

Take Sol, for example. With a heart full of determination, Sol dreams of becoming a police officer, someone who serves, protects, and uplifts their community. When we invest in families like theirs, we're not just helping them overcome today's struggles—we're planting seeds for a future filled with strength, possibility, and endless potential.

The truth is simple: when children grow up with support and encouragement, they thrive. They dream bigger, achieve more, and spark change that reaches far beyond themselves. Who knows where Sol's dreams might lead? Perhaps one day, she'll inspire the next generation, building a legacy we can't yet foresee.

This is the beauty of what we do together. Each step, each lesson, each small victory builds toward something extraordinary. It's a testament to how investing in families transforms lives and shapes brighter futures—for them, and for all of us. The possibilities are endless when we come together to create hope.

"Through the darkest moments of these last five years, there was always one constant source of hope—Pathways. Their unwavering support lifted Sol and me up and their belief in my family's potential reignited my own. I'll forever be grateful for the opportunities they've helped us discover."

- ISABEL FRANCO





Samaika, Future Mechanic
Photo by Brian Tietz
Tamiami Ford

HOW WE BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE

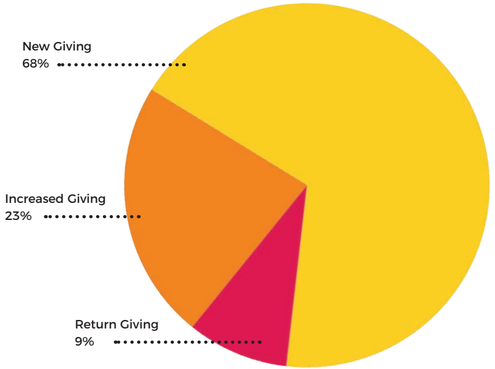
This year, to address the growing waitlist of children seeking enrollment, we launched the most ambitious initiative in Pathways' history: the "Brighter Future" campaign. Our goal was not only to raise $2.25 million, but to unlock possibility and lay a stronger foundation for children and families across Immokalee. We set out to expand our reach, enhance our programs, and ensure every child who walks through our doors could experience the promise that comes with a strong beginning. It was a call to our community to imagine what's possible when every child has the chance to build a brighter future.

To help bring that vision to life, we launched the Brighter Future Photo Project, a celebration of dreams and potential. Acclaimed photographer Brian Tietz generously donated his time and talent, working alongside our team to capture students as doctors, engineers, teachers, and community leaders. The images—woven throughout these pages—became the heart of our campaign, inviting our community to experience firsthand the limitless possibilities that education can spark. The portraits challenged perceptions, inspired hope, and affirmed our core belief: change the beginning and you change everything.

This project was a true community effort, and we extend our deepest gratitude to the local businesses that collaborated with us to make these photos possible. Their generous contributions of time, resources, and expertise helped transform our vision into a powerful reality.

Thanks to this extraordinary collaboration, the impact reached far beyond the photos themselves. The response was inspiring. Our community came together, exceeding our fundraising goal and raising $2.4 million in new or increased giving, above and beyond continued annual support. This remarkable achievement means more children will build the foundations they need to thrive, and more families will see possibilities take root. For Pathways, it represents a new chapter of growth and promise; for our community, it's an investment in the future we all share. Together, we have shown that when you invest in early education, you unlock a lifetime of opportunity—proving that every strong beginning truly does change everything.

HOW WE RAISED $2.4 million





Isaac, Future Zoologist
Photo by Brian Tietz
The Naples Zoo



Eleanor, Future Engineer
Photo by Brian Tietz
Arthrex

THE SPARK
THAT IGNITES A BRIGHTER FUTURE

It often starts with a single question: “What if?”

For the George and Cindy Rusu Family Foundation, that question sparked a transformative partnership with Pathways Early Education Center of Immokalee. It wasn’t just about giving; it was about inspiring a bigger vision and challenging an organization to see its own potential. This shared belief in the power of early education became the catalyst for the most successful fundraising campaign in Pathways’ history.

The Rusus saw something special in Pathways—an opportunity to invest in children at the most critical stage of development. “We believe that a strong educational foundation empowers individuals to not only support themselves but also to contribute meaningfully to the lives of others,” the Rusus shared.

Their vision went beyond a simple donation. They wanted to see if Pathways could think bigger and create a model for lasting change. The Foundation issued a challenge: a $750,000 matching gift for all new and increased donations to our $2.25 million Growth Campaign, to be met within one year.

Our community responded with overwhelming generosity.

Inspired by the Rusus’ leadership, donors from across the community stepped up to double their impact. Together, we not only met but exceeded our $2.25 million campaign goal, raising a remarkable $2.4 million to support the children of Immokalee.

This achievement was about more than just numbers; it was a powerful demonstration of what happens when a community rallies around a shared purpose.

These funds now position us to make a profound impact. This support allows us to enhance our classrooms with updated learning resources, provide our dedicated teachers with vital professional development in early childhood methodologies, and build even safer, more engaging playgrounds. Most importantly, it empowers us to expand our reach and serve up to 30% more children, preparing them for a foundation of lifelong success.

This commitment to early education resonated deeply with the Rusus, who were drawn to Pathways’ focus on early intervention. They understand that addressing the root causes of educational inequity is more effective than reacting to problems later in life. “When early intervention is implemented for extremely young children, the likelihood of them encountering future challenges significantly diminishes,” the Rusus explained. “This approach not only proves to be a more efficient use of resources, saving both time and money, but it also helps children avoid future pitfalls like dropping out of high school. By focusing on early development, we can capture missed opportunities and cultivate the dynamic leaders of tomorrow.”

That is the heart of our mission. We believe that by changing the beginning, we can change everything that follows. Your contributions make this possible, giving children from families with low incomes the foundation they need to build a brighter future.

“This progression naturally prompts us to inquire: ‘What bold new chapters await us?”

- GEORGE & CINDY RUSU



Samuel and Markencia, Future Builders
Photo by Brian Tietz
DeAngelis Diamond

What’s Next? A Vision for Tomorrow

The success of the Growth Campaign is not an endpoint; it’s a stepping stone. The groundwork has been laid for an even bolder vision for Pathways. “We hope that the achievements of the recently concluded campaign are regarded not as an ultimate destination, but as a vital stepping stone,” the Rusus shared. “This progression naturally prompts us to inquire: ‘What bold new chapters await us?’”

Still, too many mothers and children remain outside our colorful fences. We’re now looking across the street at our empty lot and dreaming of a new, expanded campus that can serve even more children and families. We’re exploring how the Pathways model can inspire our own community and others facing similar challenges. This is the future you are helping us build—one where every child has the opportunity to fulfill their unique potential.

The journey ahead is full of possibility, and it requires all of us. Join us as we continue to write this story of transformation. Your unwavering support, your powerful voice, and your profound belief in every child’s right to a strong beginning are what fuel the growth and endless possibilities for the children of Immokalee. Together, we are shaping a brighter future.

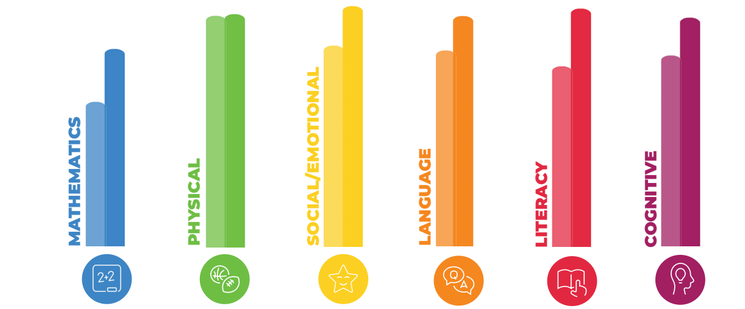
PROGRAM RESULTS

Our program results offer a window into the real impact of Pathways on the children we serve. Each data point tells the story of a child discovering confidence, curiosity, and new abilities in an environment designed for growth. These assessment results reflect not just progress in literacy and school readiness, but also the development of resilience, empathy, and a love of learning.

One of our most significant findings is that 100% of children who have been with Pathways for two or more years are fully kindergarten ready. This achievement is more than a statistic—it's powerful evidence of what consistent, high-quality early education can do. **This progress is even more significant when we consider that over 56% of our VPK students speak a language other than English at home.** When children have the benefit of sustained engagement in our nurturing environment, they not only gain essential academic skills but also build the emotional and social foundations that set them up for future success.

MEETING OR EXCEEDING DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Percentage of children (4 weeks to 5 years old) meeting or exceeding developmental milestones.[1]



	MATHEMATICS	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	LANGUAGE	LITERACY	COGNITIVE
FALL 2024	50%	86%	72%	70%	69%	74%
SPRING 2025	74%	87%	89%	82%	90%	85%
+/-	+24%	+1%	+17%	+12%	+21%	+11%

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

100%

of VPK students who attended Pathways two or more years met benchmark for kindergarten, Spring 2025.[3]



Pathways' kindergarten readiness level nearly doubles both county and state averages.[3,4]

SOURCES:
1. Teacher Strategies GOLD® Assessment
2. Early Literacy and Learning Model Assessment
3. STAR Early Literacy Assessment
4. Florida Department of Education (DOE)



Renata, Future Teacher
Photo by Brian Tietz
Pathways Early Education Center



Milton, Future Pilot
Photo by Brian Tietz
Elite Jets at The Naples Airport

WRAP AROUND PARTNERSHIPS

NUTRITION

Every child deserves a strong start, and that begins with nutritious meals each day. **At Pathways, every student receives a healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack—adding up to more than 90,000 meals served each year.** This daily nourishment helps children focus, learn, and grow, laying a foundation for a brighter future.

HUNGER RELIEF

Our commitment extends beyond the classroom walls. In partnership with Harry Chapin Food Bank of SWFL, Midwest Food Bank, and Guadalupe Catholic Charities, we organized regular food distributions for families throughout the year, including special holiday food drops. These efforts ensured that families had reliable access to healthy food, even during challenging times. **Last year alone, together we distributed over 60,000 pounds of food**—strengthening the well-being of our children and the families who support them every day.

BEHAVIORAL & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

A child's emotional and behavioral well-being is just as important as their physical health. To support the holistic development of every student, we partner with several expert organizations. The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), Specialized Therapeutic and Analysis Resource (STAR), and Early Steps collaborate with us to **provide crucial assessments, therapeutic services, and referrals. These partnerships also equip our teachers with specialized support and strategies,** ensuring our classrooms are nurturing environments where every child can flourish.

DENTAL CARE

A healthy smile is crucial for a child's confidence and well-being. With generous support from the Naples Children Foundation (NCF), our partnership with the University of Florida's pediatric dental program brings vital **on-site care to each of our 125 students twice a year, including cleanings, treatments, and dental education.** The program also donates toothbrushes for use at home and in the classroom, where students brush their teeth daily. This collaboration establishes healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

WATER SAFETY & SWIM LESSONS

Living in Florida, water safety is not just a skill—it is a necessity. Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for young children in our state, which is why our partnership with the Safe & Healthy Children's Coalition's SWIM Central program is so vital. Through this collaboration, our **VPK students attend swim and water safety classes during the summer.** This life-saving initiative equips children with essential skills, building their confidence in and around water while giving their families greater peace of mind.

SUPPORTING OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS

Caring for an infant comes with unique needs, and our partnerships with Baby Basics and the Meals of Hope Baby Food Pantry help ensure families have the essentials. **Through these vital collaborations, families in our program receive monthly diaper donations—over 100,000 distributed last year alone—along with other critical supplies like formula, baby food, and wipes.** This support removes significant financial burdens, allowing parents to focus on what matters most: nurturing their child's healthy development from the very beginning.

BUILDING HOME LIBRARIES

A love for reading begins at home. Our partnership with Collier Books helps put new books directly into the hands of our children, allowing them to build their very own home libraries. **This past year, their generosity provided over 1,000 books**, giving families the invaluable resource of stories they can share together again and again.

VISION & HEARING HEALTH

The ability to see and hear clearly is fundamental to how a child learns and explores the world. Our partnership with the Naples Lions Club ensures that **every student receives crucial vision and hearing screenings.** By identifying potential issues early, this collaboration provides children with the support they need to participate fully in the classroom. When necessary, we help connect families with specialists, ensuring every child has the opportunity for a healthy start.

PARTNERS: ABLE Academy, Baby Basics of Collier County, Collier Books, Early Learning Coalition, Early Steps, Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System, Harry Chapin Food Bank of SWFL, Laces of Love, Meals of Hope, Midwest Food Bank, Naples Children Foundation, Naples Lions Club, Safe & Healthy Children's Coalition, STAR, Special Olympics, University of Florida and World Vision.

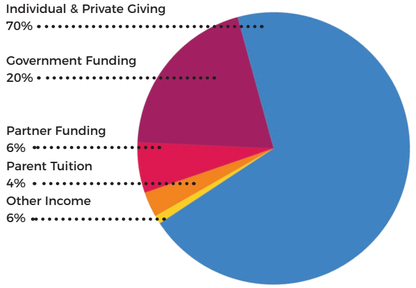


Ismael, Future CEO
Photo by Brian Tietz
Naples Transportation and Tours, Hoffman Family Companies

FINANCIALS

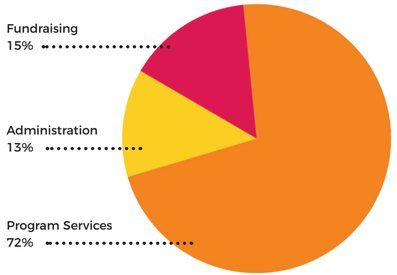
JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025

THIS YEAR, WE RAISED
$4.4 million



WE INVESTED
$3 million

IN EARLY LEARNING AND CARE PROGRAMS FOR UNDER SERVED CHILDREN.



EXPENSES IN PROGRAM, FUNDRAISING AND ADMINISTRATION CATEGORIES

Read our full financial report at pathwaysearlyeducation.org/financials.

A YEAR OF IMPACTFUL STEWARDSHIP

At Pathways, every dollar raised is a step toward transforming lives. This past year, thanks to the unwavering support of our community, we achieved remarkable financial milestones that directly fueled our mission. With $4.4 million raised, we were able to invest $3 million into early learning and care programs for underserved children, ensuring they receive the strong academic foundation they deserve.

Our commitment to fiscal responsibility and transparency remains steadfast. By streamlining processes and diversifying funding sources, we've strengthened our ability to serve more children and families while maintaining the highest standards of care. As you explore the financial details, know that every contribution—big or small—has played a vital role in creating brighter futures.

Platinum Transparency 2025 Candid.

Charity Navigator FOUR-STAR



Sol, Future Judge
Photo by Brian Tietz
Collier County Courthouse

Cover Photo: Milton, Sol, & Mariah
Future First Responders
Photo by Brian Tietz
North Collier Fire Control & Rescue
and Collier County Sheriff 's Office

join us.

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PATHWAYS
EARLY EDUCATION CENTER
of Immokalee

COLLIER COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

NAPLES CHILDREN FOUNDATION

RICHARD M. SCHULZE FAMILY FOUNDATION

United Way
United Way of Collier and the Keys

PULTE FAMILY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION