SPRING 2024

pathfindersforyou.org

pathfinders

you never have to walk alone

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

THE HEART OF COLLABORATION

At nine years old, my life drastically changed when I was nearly crushed to death in an ATV accident. The impact tore apart my visceral cavity, causing internal bleeding from lacerations on my liver and bowels. As a result, my spleen, one kidney, and 20% of my pancreas were irreparably damaged and had to be removed. The violent nature of the accident also led to a couple of degrees of scoliosis and an incomplete spinal cord injury, leaving me paralyzed from the torso down.


Amanda Seubert

Since that life-altering event, therapy has been my constant companion. Over the past 24 years, therapy has served as a touchstone in my life, helping me navigate the ups and downs that come with living in a wheelchair. Sometimes, I need a helping hand to get back up the hill, and the Bridging Bionics Foundation has been my lifeline, offering hope and encouragement when I need it most. Through their collaboration with Pathfinders, particularly with counselor Jarid Rollins, I've accessed invaluable support. I started attending sessions with Pathfinders several years ago when I was struggling with my living situation. The counselors provided me with tools, resources, and support to navigate challenging times successfully. More recently, when I faced the betrayal of another healthcare professional, returning to the compassionate support of Pathfinders helped me work through my grief and pain.

The collaboration between Pathfinders and Bridging Bionics has significantly enhanced my therapy experiences. Understanding the interconnectedness of my mind and body has enabled me to quickly identify the most effective tools for each situation. Moreover, the collaboration has empowered me to recognize better what will be most beneficial in moments of need. Throughout my journey, I have been surrounded by individuals who love and support me unconditionally. Whether carrying me up flights of stairs or assisting me in using inaccessible facilities, they have demonstrated that I can overcome any challenge with determination and support. It may require a bit of extra muscle and planning, but the people willing to go the extra mile make all the difference.

— Amanda Seubert, Pathfinders Client

FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Friends and Supporters of Pathfinders,

Spring is finally here, and I welcome its warmth and rejuvenating energy with open arms. This past winter was particularly challenging for me personally, marked by the loss of both my parents within a short period. Their passing, while not unexpected, weighed heavily on my heart, leading me through what I've come to understand as a period of "wintering"—an active acceptance of sadness, allowing myself to feel the pain in its entirety. As the snow melts and the sun renews its warmth, I embrace a spectrum of emotions, including hope and gratitude. Just as I encourage my clients to do after a vital loss, I have taken the time to metabolize my heartbreak. To heal, you need to feel. Through this process of grieving and healing, the unwavering support of this special community has provided me solace and strength. The work we do at Pathfinders and the connections we foster have played a significant role in my journey towards healing.

I am immensely proud of the growth and impact Pathfinders continues to achieve within our community. Our School-Based Program has thrived enormously as we now serve over 400 students from Aspen to Parachute. With the addition of our new bilingual counselor, Amy Santizo, we can dedicate our resources to an entirely new segment of our community, and the response has been incredible.

Over the past few months, I have had the chance to meet with our counselors individually, and every interaction has left me in awe of the depth and compassion they bring to their work. Their dedication to supporting young and old individuals through grief and illness is nothing short of remarkable. Despite the pervasive pain surrounding us, the stories of hope and healing they share reaffirm our mission: Pathfinders is Making a Difference, which is truly gratifying. In a world where loss and illness can create profound feelings of isolation, Pathfinders stands as a beacon of support, ensuring that no one has to navigate their journey alone.


Photography by Michele Cardamone

As you reflect on the impact of our work and the stories shared here, I express my heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing support. Your generosity and belief in our mission allow us to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. You are an invaluable member of our team, and we are enormously thankful for that. We wish you a summer filled with warmth, joy, and the knowledge that your contributions help to bring much-needed light into the lives of many in our valley.

With deep appreciation,
Allison Daily

COUNSELOR SPOTLIGHT: GETTING TO KNOW JARID ROLLINS



What brought you to work with Pathfinders, and how did you come to learn about the organization?

It has been some time since I reflected on that. I had been practicing therapy for six years in the Roaring Fork Valley and had heard of Pathfinders during that time. Learning about their mission and approach struck me for its simplicity: providing people with a dedicated space to navigate one of life's toughest challenges. This single-minded focus felt like a gift. In a community setting, therapists often juggle various aspects of a person's life, but with Pathfinders, I could concentrate solely on grief and loss.

In what capacity do you serve with Pathfinders?

I primarily work as a community therapist, mainly seeing clients in the evenings. Occasionally, I also contribute to Pathfinders' School-Based Program, offering therapeutic services in local schools.

What is your professional counseling background?

I am a licensed clinical social worker with a decade of experience in mental health. While most of my career has been in the Roaring Fork Valley, I have had the opportunity to work in diverse settings and roles. From schools to outpatient clinics and community organizing to jail services, I have employed a wide range of therapeutic approaches tailored to the needs of the individuals and communities I serve.

What would you say are your specialties? Or what is your primary approach when working with Pathfinders clients and in general?

My specialization lies in trauma therapy, encompassing modalities like trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). I frequently integrate these tools into my work with Pathfinders clients. However, I often lean towards person-centered therapy, setting aside techniques and preconceptions to focus on the individual's unique experience.

Can you address the need for Spanish-speaking grief support in the schools/community?

While I am not fluent in Spanish, I collaborate with Clinica Del Pueblo and regularly hear accounts of immigration trauma and its profound impact on individuals' lives. These narratives closely parallel the stories of grief and loss shared with Pathfinders. Counselors who can provide services in an individual's primary language are invaluable in addressing these complex needs.

How has working with Pathfinders made you grow as a therapist? And what do you appreciate most about working with Pathfinders?

Quantifying this growth is challenging. I have witnessed my personal and professional development unfold over the past three or four years with Pathfinders. Working with Pathfinders clients has bolstered my confidence and deepened my compassion for the individuals and families in our community.

UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS

FEEL THE EASE & FLOW ON THE COLORADO

GRIEF & HONOR RAFT TRIPS

JULY 19TH-21ST

AUG 16TH-18TH • SEPT 6TH-8TH

WILDERNESS HEALING | GRIEF COUNSELORS & GUIDES
NOURISHING FOOD | SUPPORT & COMPANIONSHIP

Fees are on a sliding scale and sponsored by Pathfinders.
Trained raft guides and counselors will be present.

Please call for information: Lisa Moretti 970.456.2769

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www.pathfindersforyou.org

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PHOTO BY OZEL GÓMEZ FROM PEXELS

events

make a plan to join us

GO TO: pathfindersforyou.org/news-events for updates and details

may	june	july	august	sept
breathwork 6:30-7:30pm May 13: Aspen Chapel May 19: Carbondale	**breathwork** 6:30-7:30pm June 2: Carbondale June 10: Aspen Chapel	**breathwork** 6:30-7:30pm July 7: Carbondale	**breathwork** 6:30-7:30pm August 4: Carbondale	**raft trip** September 6-8: Colorado River
sound healing 5:30-6:30pm May 20: Aspen Chapel	**yoga** 7:30-8:30pm June 16: Glenwood	**raft trip** July 19-21: Colorado River	**raft trip** August 16-21: Colorado River	**breathwork** 6:30-7:30pm Sept 29: Carbondale
yoga 7:30-8:30pm May 21: Glenwood	ONGOING	**teen raft trip** July 6: 10:30-2 Colorado River	ONGOING	ONGOING
ONGOING	**courage + compassion** 9:30am: 3rd Sunday Glenwood Springs	ONGOING	**courage + compassion** 9:30am: 3rd Sunday Glenwood Springs	**courage + compassion** 9:30am: 3rd Sunday Glenwood Springs
courage + compassion 9:30am: 3rd Sunday Glenwood Springs	**grief group** 6-7:30pm Tuesdays Village Rd, Aspen	**courage + compassion** 9:30am: 3rd Sunday Glenwood Springs	**grief group** 6-7:30pm Tuesdays Village Rd, Aspen	**grief group** 6-7:30pm Tuesdays Village Rd, Aspen
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FINDING JOY IN SERVICE: A FAMILY AFFAIR


Becky Ward & Martha Wyrsch

When Martha Wyrsch and her husband settled in Snowmass full-time, she sought a way to give back to her community. Inspired by her sister's involvement with Pathfinders Angels, Martha joined the Angels team despite not considering herself an accomplished cook. Surprisingly, it became a bonding experience for her and her husband, who took on the role of the family chef. Exploring new recipes together, including vegan and vegetarian options, brought them closer and filled their kitchen with laughter and joy.

For Martha, the reward of making meals goes beyond the kitchen. It is about strengthening family bonds and community connections. Cooking for Pathfinders Angels became a shared passion between Martha and her sister, Becky Ward. They even looped in their other four siblings as they exchanged recipes and sought meal ideas from each other, deepening their already close relationship. Pathfinders Angels further cemented the bond Martha and Becky share, as they support each other with meal deliveries and cover for each other when needed.

Martha's journey took a poignant turn when she lost her husband, Gerry, last June. In her grief, she found solace in the embrace of Pathfinders' grief counselor, Allison Daily, and Angels' Coordinator, Debbie Kreutzer. The grief counseling she received, along with the support and encouragement of the Pathfinders community, became a lifeline, restoring her spirit in more ways than she can even express. Preparing meals and helping others in the Roaring Fork Valley infused her with newfound joy. Through acts of kindness, Martha found a path forward, discovering purpose in serving others during her darkest moments. Since Gerry's passing, preparing and delivering meals for Pathfinders' clients has brought her solace and meaning in her grief journey.

Becky's journey with Pathfinders Angels began during the pandemic when she sought opportunities to give back to her community. Encouraged by another Pathfinders Angel, she joined the cooking team and discovered fulfillment in preparing meals for clients in need. What started as a volunteer opportunity soon became a source of deep connection and gratification.

For Becky, the true reward lies in the thankfulness of the valley residents and families for whom she provides meals. Hearing stories of how her home-cooked meals comfort patients battling illness reaffirms her dedication to the cause. Knowing that her efforts contribute to someone's journey toward health and recovery fills her heart with purpose and fulfillment. She also said it is gratifying when clients are back on their "own two feet" and no longer require Pathfinders Angels' services.

One encounter that touched Becky deeply was when she had the opportunity to reconnect with a former boss and friend she knew over 40 years ago. Amidst shared memories and conversations, Becky found solace in offering companionship and support to someone dear to her, highlighting the profound impact of human connection in times of need.

—Alyssa Shenk Genshaft, Pathfinders Development and Events Coordinator

THE BENEFITS OF BODY-CENTERED GRIEF SUPPORT & COMMUNITY GRIEVING

Grief encompasses a spectrum of emotions that not only reside in our minds and broken hearts but also infiltrate the tissues of our bodies. Emotions are meant to flow through us, yet the more challenging ones are often harder to feel and express, leading us to resist and suppress them, causing them to become trapped in our bodies.

As an isolationist culture, it has become commonplace to grapple with our emotions alone and conceal our grief from others. Grief is often regarded as something to hide away in the recesses of our lives, enabling us to return to a façade of normalcy, even among our closest loved ones. There is a prevailing belief that burdening others with our pain is best avoided.
Ironically, pain is a universal experience and often serves as the catalyst for significant personal growth. Discovering outlets for safe and compassionate expression can be incredibly liberating, not only for our hearts and minds but also for releasing tension and holding in our bodies.

Body-centered or somatic therapies and experiences are valuable complements to traditional talk therapy. Sharing our stories as part of the grief process is crucial, particularly when combined with somatic practices that enable the physical release of grief's weight. These practices can include activities such as simple walks, breathing the fresh air, engaging in more rigorous exercise, literally shaking loose tension held in the body, or even lying directly on the ground to allow the physical sensation of the earth below you to hold and absorb any pain that is ready to release.

At Pathfinders, our dedication lies in providing diverse opportunities for emotions to find expression through our bodies within both group and community settings. We offer various sessions, including breathwork, sound healing, therapeutic yoga for grief, and our annual summer raft trips. These experiences seamlessly integrate counseling with the somatic healing power of nature, fostering a supportive and enjoyable environment for all participants.

Our somatic offerings are warmly received and deeply appreciated by the community. Participants in our breathwork sessions have shared profound experiences. One individual expressed, "I felt peace for the first time in months and slept better than I have in a very long time." Another participant conveyed gratitude, stating, "Your breathwork offering was delivered with such tender care that I felt safe to feel in a way that rarely happens." Many found the breathwork session to be a much-needed release. As one shared, "I have been carrying some pain with me for ages, and I was finally able to put some of it down during breathwork." The combination of music and thoughtful instructions created a welcoming atmosphere and a beautiful experience, as noted by another participant. These testimonials underscore the transformative power of breathwork in providing emotional release and fostering inner peace.

Similarly, with sound healing, one participant shared, "Megan's sound healing journeys are both deeply relaxing and dynamic. The container she creates is filled with heartfelt kindness, creating a welcoming and safe experience for all. Her offerings are a refuge and gift to this community."

In addition to our regular somatic programming, we recently collaborated with The Arts Campus at Willits (TACAW) to host a Community Grief and Wellness Moving Meditation event featuring guided meditation, expressive movement, art, and dance to explore grief in a communal setting without relying solely on verbal communication. Following the event, one participant noted the remarkable change in her husband's demeanor: "The day after the event, I noticed an incredible 'lightness of being' in my husband that I hadn't seen since before September 2021 when his son died by suicide. He's been doing pretty well through the past few years with ups and downs (to be expected), but yesterday I noticed a difference. He was so light-hearted, playful, and funny – like his 'old' self. I believe I was also lighter." This event exemplifies our commitment to providing innovative and impactful experiences for our community to heal together.

As we expand our somatic offerings, we invite all who are interested to join us on this journey of healing and self-discovery. Together, we can navigate the complexities of grief and cultivate a community of support and understanding.

—Robyn Hubbard, Pathfinders Somatic Grief Counselor

RIDING THE RAPIDS OF HEALING

PATHFINDERS' GRIEF AND HONOR RAFT TRIPS

I vividly recall the day I sat down with Mike Podmore and Lisa Moretti, accompanied by our counselor Jennifer Glynn, to discuss their vision for wilderness therapy river trips tailored to support clients grappling with grief, loss, and illness. Both Mike and Lisa, seasoned raft guides, had traversed significant personal losses and had found solace in Pathfinders' counseling services. They sought to merge therapy with the therapeutic power of the river. Over coffee, we explored the concept of uniting small groups on river journeys, equipping them with tools to navigate their challenges while allowing nature to work its healing magic. What began as a brainstorming session has blossomed into a robust summer program, with Mike leading the trips and Lisa crafting nourishing meals that elevate the river experience.



Mike Podmore & Lisa Moretti

We offer three guided rafting excursions each summer, accompanied by two trained grief counselors and a music therapist. These three-day adventures meander through the serene landscape of the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River. Working together to create a one-of-a-kind experience, Mike and Lisa complement each other perfectly, and Pathfinders is incredibly fortunate to have them as our guides into the depths of grief on tranquil waters. When nature throws us a curveball, be it a sudden downpour or a quirky mishap, Mike and Lisa infuse the group with calm and laughter and are a blessing beyond measure.

Mike embodies kindness and competence, serving as a steadfast guide on the river. His strength and gentle spirit shine through, and he often shares insights from his loss journey with each rafting group. Being in Mike's presence evokes a sense of Zen; I always seek out moments with him during trips, knowing I'll emerge feeling centered and at peace. Lisa is the heart of our rafting expeditions, delighting everyone with her culinary prowess. Her meals are nothing short of spectacular, nourishing both body and soul. I've never eaten better than on a raft trip with Lisa at the helm. Cooking with love and a genuine desire to serve others, Lisa creates an atmosphere of warmth and inclusivity. I find solace in her kitchen, where her words of love and encouragement lift my spirits.

"These trips hold immense significance for me," shares Mike. "Losing my late wife Ruth to cancer in 2014 inspired me to honor her memory and her love for rivers in a special way. Nature's healing touch is palpable, and I feel deeply honored to facilitate these experiences for others navigating their journeys of grief and illness. The shared experience of loss brought Lisa and me together, and the river canyons have provided such calming relief. Choosing this same stretch of river for our wedding in 2017 was a poignant testament to that."

Reflecting on her loss, Lisa, who tragically lost her father to a heart attack in 1979, notes, "Back then, we lacked the vocabulary and understanding to discuss grief as we do today openly." She finds it profoundly meaningful to create a safe space where individuals can explore their grief in the company of others who share a deep and personal understanding of loss. Against the breathtaking backdrop of Ruby Canyon, these river journeys offer a space for self-care and connection, fostering moments of reflection, conversation, laughter, and music.

—Allison Daily, Executive Director and Grief Counselor

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF



The fifth anniversary of losing our son, Tyler, is upon us. Each day without him is hard, but this milestone feels especially difficult. The time since I last kissed, hugged, held, or talked to Tyler feels unbearable. We have recently moved to be closer to our daughters and grandchildren, who bring us immense love and joy. In working with Pathfinders' grief counselor, Allison Daily, I learned that it's okay to feel sadness, loss, and joy simultaneously. This lesson has been a blessing as a grandmother and a grieving mother. I often remember the story of the mother elephant who grieved deeply for her lost baby, honoring and mourning it with profound emotion.

I strive to honor Tyler and his light, just like that mother elephant. Tyler was pure joy, always spreading happiness to others with his creativity and talent. Sometimes, I feel like I'm not doing enough to honor him. I am in awe of parents who advocate for gun reform and legislation to protect other children after losing their own. Their courage and dedication inspire me to find ways to shine Tyler's light even brighter in the darkness.

In a session with Allison, she shared a story about how the heart is like a fabric that needs stitching up after a loss and how, sometimes, these stitches can be messy. Since I discovered needle felting last fall, this analogy has taken on meaning for me. I feel closest to Tyler and most at peace when I am being creative, and I have found that needle felting mirrors my grief, providing solace in making stitches with wool. When needle felting, you start with a wad of wool, representing overwhelming grief. Though it weighs little, it feels heavy, much like the weight of sorrow. Sometimes, you must sit with it. When ready, you begin stabbing the wool with a needle. This therapeutic process involves repeated, occasionally intense, effort to shape the wool. It can take hours or days; sometimes, you must set it aside and return to it. You keep at it, working through it, just like grief.

Allison taught me that grief is love, and my love for Tyler is beautiful. From the wool, you create something meaningful, transforming pain into love. Afterward, you feel a lightness, like after a good cry. The most remarkable part is that what I create might bring a little joy to someone else.

—Janice Ribich, Pathfinders Client

(To purchase an animal in memory of Tyler or a loved one you have lost, visit the Ty Ray Gifts shop on Instagram @tyraythankyouray or inquire directly to Janice at Jktribich@gmail.com)

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