**WELCOME SPEECH**

**FOR**

**NITA D’AGOSTINO**

Hello everyone! I want to thank all of you for being here and for sharing in the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of our organization, Pathstone. Whether you have been with us and working to volunteer and support our very worthwhile objectives throughout our history, or whether you are relatively new, very new.... or... **just showed up**... (**Wait for the laugh**), tonight is the night you will know for sure.... beyond a shadow of a doubt, that everything you do for this organization and its partners and beneficiaries makes a tremendous difference. It’s true what Aesop said....”No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. Like a pebble skipping on the surface of a lake, even the most seemingly insignificant gestures have a way of triggering a ripple effect.... now imagine the effort, determination, creativity, and tenacity each and every one of you from our partner organizations has brought to the table...your impact on your community, your neighbors, and beyond has created an indelible, lasting, meaningful, result.

Now that we’ve taken a few minutes to acknowledge all that has been attempted... and accomplished over the years in the regions we support, and tonight, most importantly here in Pennsylvania, imagine the impact... in education and health... from occupational and personal health and safety training to early childhood education, further educational support, and emergency and shelter services, to workforce and community development and outreach, no matter what entities we are working with, those local advocates and organizations, with our support, relentlessly boost the morale, the viability, and the **POSSIBILITIES** of countless people, their families, their neighbors, and ultimately, all of us.... and although we do not encourage giving in order to get something in return, supporting Pathstone and its mission really **IS** the gift that keeps on giving.... but **YOU** already **KNOW THAT**!!!

I cannot overstate the importance of our mission and the depth of our vision. Pathstone’s mission is to build family and individual self sufficiency by strengthening farmworker, rural and urban communities. Our organization also promotes social justice. Basically our vision and our goal is to see to it that everyone has an adequate opportunity in life ... a chance to have an even shot at building meaningful self sufficiency. A man named Robert Ingersoll said, “We rise by lifting others.”

Remember the saying, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for the day. **TEACH** a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime?” At Pathstone, thanks to all of your efforts, we have experienced unprecedented outreach in the areas of concentration upon which we focus. In hindsight, I am happy to say, that connections we have forged endure. And as our clients find their strength and confidence, Pathstone in turn finds ways to encourage, recognize, and learn from earlier encounters. Last year, Pathstone and its partners honored four former interns in Adams County, PA. on the last day of work in the summer internship course. Initially, as part of the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program fifteen years ago, these four bright young children were enrolled, ready to work and to tap into the resources that would encourage a positive future. Last year, thanks to Pathstone’s partnership with ECHMSP, those same participants... now young college students, took part in a paid internship program. Those opportunities are ongoing and provide encouragement for children and young people throughout our areas of concentration, including Pennsylvania.

The filmmaker, Michael Apted, produced a series of documentaries on children’s development, known as the “Up” series. His work was built around a telling statement. To paraphrase, “Give me the child and I will show you the man... or woman.” It’s been said that character, drive, focus, and will to accomplish and succeed are established in young children at a very early age. By having the chance to create meaningful programs and encourage participation, Pathstone gives thousands of children, young people, and adults the tools to approach building healthy, engaged lives on an increasingly level playing field.

All that we do... each milestone we achieve.... each challenge that encourages Pathstone to rise and prevail, forms an opportunity to assist people who otherwise might not have the awareness or tools to help themselves. With our help... **YOUR** help... taphat of our esteemed partners, we continue to build on our foundations to bring well being and personal pride and confidence to those that appreciate, benefit, and in turn, build stronger communities. I want to thank all of you and I look forward to continued, mutual, positive impact and success. Thank you all!