

# RITE OF PASSAGE

*Dedicated to improving the lives of youth, families and communities.*

## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY:

ENGAGING FAMILIES AND  
COMMUNITIES AS PARTNERS

### Welcome Letter

Building better futures for youth through scholarships

### The Village

A system of community (not congregate) care

### Top Community Initiatives

ROP programs engage the community in unique ways



# Building Better Futures for All Youth



Dear Reader,

As Director of Passageway Scholarship Foundation, I have the privilege of helping Rite of Passage alumni pursue their educational and career goals. The success stories inspire me. Salvadore is pursuing a BS in Construction Management while working as a foreman. Jordan, who attended a technical school, is now a professional welder. Kaitlyn became an insurance adjuster. Vincent is a teacher. Frank, the son of immigrants, earned his degree in political science and ran a congressional campaign. Alex will graduate from law school this May.

These young men and women remind us of what can happen when a community of family members, professionals and concerned citizens work together to identify and develop the potential in our youth. The image of a crowd surfer comes to mind – a young person gliding along a sea of people as they lift him up and pass him on, cheering in their shared mission to keep the youth from falling.

Each Passageway Scholar, in a sense, has “crowd surfed,” supported by a crowd of parents, family members, teachers, ROP staff, probation officers, employers, mentors and community members. This crowd has lifted the youth up through challenging circumstances toward post-secondary degrees and employment.

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2017 ROP Magazine highlighting the work of Rite of Passage staff and the children and communities they serve every day. It is an honor to be working in this dedicated, professional and (appropriately) raucous crowd – a community doing whatever necessary to help kids succeed.

**Lisa Broman**

Director of Passageway Scholarship Foundation

# It Takes a Community

*It takes a community to enact positive change.*

*It takes a community to make a difference.*

*It takes a community to save a life.*



Integrating vulnerable youth back into their communities is a key component of our mission to improve the lives of youth. These changes may, at first, be small: a child smiles for the first time in weeks; a family shares a meaningful meal at one table; a student solves their first algebra problem; a high school athlete scores his first touchdown; a 20-year old submits a college application at the request of their youth-mentor. Little changes - through the dedication and continued presence of a supportive community - can enact substantial impact on the lives of youth, family and communities.

A child's smile becomes the first step toward permanency. A shared meal lays the foundation of a home. One victory in the classroom or on the field creates a path toward continued successes and milestones. Skills which are developed and honed are translated into a high school diploma with new opportunities for a post-secondary education. Vocational training leads to mastery of a skilled labor and of a professional career. A college application represents a second chance to make the right decisions, and the opportunity to become an educated advocate of positive change.

At Rite of Passage, we feel it is our social responsibility to support these community efforts, and to enable collective acts of kindness. Whether it is a prayer or a word of support, a donation to the Passageway Scholarship Foundation, sitting in the stands of a Rite of Passage football game, or even fostering a child, we are enacting positive change through supporting and strengthening communities.



# The Village

*Building a system of community (not congregate) care.*

The Village at Canyon State Academy impacts the lives of over a thousand Arizona youth each year. We wondered how we would provide them with a safe environment in which they would learn skills that they would need to return to their home communities while providing them with the safety and care that is the cornerstone of every Rite of Passage program. Research has clearly shown that youth who are left without connections to family and to their communities struggle with the development of pro-social skills, to say nothing about academic or career skill sets they will need as young adults. Conversely, communities who never think or interact with this kind of youth population either forget they exist or (sadly) are afraid of them, forcing a divide that makes integration and permanency difficult.

The vision for the Village was born from the desire to welcome the community into the lives of the youth we serve. This new way of offering therapeutic and rehabilitative services to youth and family touches lives in unexpected ways, perpetuating positive change. This “community integration” model encourages and invites the community to be a part of the lives of children who have been placed at Canyon State Academy through authentic and meaningful interactions.

## *A Community Zone*

This “Community Zone” began with a partnership with the Sun Valley Community Church. Through their support



- and their presence at the center of our campus - youth in our programs will have the opportunity to interact, to learn and to grow from the generous presence of the 3,000-member congregation. Church members have pledged their support to the youth on campus, and are committed to help in simple, heartfelt ways. Church members pray for the youth, and support them by attending normalized athletic events, by acting as mentors and/or show their support by their participation in the next phase of our “Village” - the Enterprise Zone.

## *The Enterprise Zone*

Three social enterprises based on vocational tracts which are a core tenet of a Rite of Passage School (barbering, culinary arts and the development of pro-social skills) now form the heart of the Enterprise Zone. A thrift shop, a restaurant/café and barber shop will serve as a physical representation of the eclectic partnerships and commitment from the community - and, to our mission to improve the lives of the youth we serve. These shops will invite the community to support our mission by simply buying a cup of coffee or purchasing a haircut at the barber shop.

Youth may elect to work at the retail thrift shop, “Repurposed” (which will be more of a “thrift boutique than a traditional thrift shop). The store (whose tag line reads: “Second chance for First Choices”) will be a place where community members can donate clothing items they no longer use and that youth can purchase from wages and/or

# VOICES FROM THE ROP “COMMUNITY”



Community service is an integral part of the programming at Uta Halee Academy because it helps our young women become better advocates for themselves and others. Our students are quick to step in when they see someone in need, wanting to genuinely offer what they can to help. Working with homeless shelters and the Lydia House—a shelter for women and children who have been subject to domestic violence—brings them to tears, and the realization that they have the power to enact positive change in themselves and for others.

- Kristi Lesley

**Uta Halee Academy**

*Trafficked girls program in Omaha, NE*

We have learned that family is not only defined by names or blood; it's defined by commitment and love. It truly takes a village to raise a child, and we have built relationships with community members who have volunteered to read during story hour, throw birthday parties or other celebrations. Families, loved ones, placing agencies, providers, community members, and Desert Lily Academy staff have come together to help these young children learn healthy ways of processing their trauma and provide a place where these kids can just be kids in a safe, supportive, fun, and interactive environment.

- Dana Bennett

**Sibling Group Program at CSA**

*Young children, high-impact shelter in Queen Creek, AZ*

Rite Track is one of the few services available for probationary youth of Imperial County and one of the things I've learned is that the youth we serve share one thing: the lack of family stability and the need for love. We offer more than services—we offer our students the opportunity to discover what loving someone feels like, by helping them pick up the pieces to eventually stand on their own. It's beautiful to be able to witness our students mature and their parents and guardians become more involved.

- Marysol Medina

**Rite Track**

*Community-based prevention program in Southern CA*

Crescent Leadership Academy, which serves students 7th through the 12th grades who have been expelled from other schools in the New Orleans area, graduated 100% of our seniors last year. We will graduate 100% of our seniors this year. We attribute that to building relationships with their parents, building relationships with the kids and creating opportunities for them to be successful where they don't drop out.

- Nick Dean

**Crescent Leadership Academy**

*Alternative High School in New Orleans, LA*



their stipends. Like the rest of the village, the thrift store is designed to bring community and the youth together.

The café, called QC Junction, will be an inviting space with a comfortable lounge where youth and visitors can mingle, fostering healthy, positive relationships. Culinary Arts students will glean and gain practical experience in an atmosphere that is aimed at providing quality breakfast, lunch, coffee and ice cream - comfortable seating and Wi-Fi service will entice visitors to stay, especially on fair weather days when a roll-up patio will invite the outdoors “inside.”

Likewise, the barbershop “NextGen” will showcase students who are pursuing barbering and cosmetology certifications while enrolled at one of the campus’s academies. The barbershop will be a “fun” business with a distinctive “training center” feel.

The Enterprise Zone and church are designed to provide youth with opportunities to discover new vocations and relationships, fostered through the creation - and perpetual growth - of a new community.

# OPPORTUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS:

*learning about community resources from the inside-out*

DePaul Academy is considered a “secure” facility, and yet its students are interning with local businesses, completing meaningful community service projects with homeless shelters and food banks and learning valuable new skills through positive interactions in the community. This innovative approach to residential treatment—connecting kids to community—is based on restorative justice principles and research which shows that youth who feel connected to their communities lead more successful lives after congregate care.

There is a logic to DePaul Academy’s unique curriculum based on well-cited evidence which suggests that youth in residential treatment become “institutionalized” after nine months with no contact with family or community. Institutionalization strips youth of independence and self-advocacy, making the necessary transition back home extremely difficult. Youth in those situations are bereft of resources, and oftentimes lack not only the connections they will need to succeed, but also the ability to find these resources.

After only its first full year of operation, DePaul has formed partnerships with Hero’s Camp and its ministries, the

community food bank, the local homeless shelter, “Hope Ministries”, Habitat for Humanity, the Logan Center and Better World Books. Students who take part in community service and internship opportunities not only “give back” to the community, but they receive something in return: an education on specific industries and skill sets, therapy delivered through pro-social interactions with community members and a knowledge of the resources that exist in their communities—all ingredients to a successful transition home.

Better World Books—a company which supplies low-income families with books—has provided DePaul students with internship opportunities. Internships, which typically last six weeks, introduce youth to six different aspects of the business (such as marketing, HR, shipping/packing, and accounting.) One recent DePaul graduate who had completed an internship is now a full-time employee with the company.

Although only one year in operation, DePaul’s commitment to youth, families and communities is showing startling, positive outcomes. Youth exposed to the community through this unique programming seem to value the personal connections they make with homeless shelter volunteers and staff. Handshakes, especially, hold a special meaning for DePaul students who make a point to shake the hand of every community member they meet.

Of the students who are actively engaged with the community “...they don’t runaway when they are out in the community. I think it’s because they don’t feel trapped at DePaul,” said Program Director, Ike Shipman. “Instead, they see DePaul as a place where there is opportunity.”



## Colorado Youth Pair with Mentors for Powerful Change



“The only people in my life I can trust are my grandmother and my mentor,” said one high school student who participates in Friends for Youth’s Success Journey EDU program. Friends for Youth, a nonprofit entity in Colorado, pairs positive adult mentors with youth at risk of academic failure or truancy with adult mentors who help them to develop positive academic, social and emotional skills.

One student has made impressive gains in her self-confidence in the classroom and the hallways at school a since she made the decision to try the Friends for Youth program.

“Now, my Friends for Youth mentor is the most important person in my life,” she said. Once, her shyness made it a struggle for her to find friends and even kept her from participating in classroom activities and discussions. After

working with her mentor, however the student reports that she has “three new friends” and “is becoming more comfortable with other girls.” Working with a mentor has helped her to realize how her actions impact others and “...the importance of standing up for myself—and for what is right.”

Colorado schools which utilize Friends for Youth Mentors have seen impressive outcomes: youth who may have “fallen through the cracks” are becoming leaders in the classroom, and contributing to the positive culture of the school. The power of mentors—who provide youth with support as well as guidance—are a key component for youth to realize their goals. Through a new partnership, ROP hopes to expand Friends for Youth’s presence in Colorado, and to explore the possibility of adding mentorship programs to other Rite of Passage programs.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH BETSY BAKER:

*at the heart of Taneytown  
and Silver Oak Academy*

For 7-8 years, I have attended nearly every visit day at Silver Oak Academy.

I just love it. The community has provided a mentorship for the students; and the students have provided us with a helping hand that we can't imagine losing. So much learning happens on both sides.

Recently, a Rite of Passage staff writer had the opportunity to sit down with Silver Oak Academy Community Advisory Board Member Betsy Baker. Ms. Baker, who has been involved with the students at Silver Oak for nearly a decade, says with a smile that she “loves them.” In this interview, we asked her about the unique relationship between Silver Oak students and the community.

*Thank you for talking to me today about Silver Oak students and their involvement in the community.*

Thank you! Did you hear that they received an award from the Maryland Governor's Office and the Baltimore Ravens? Silver Oak students were among a handful of community-based organizations honored for their outstanding volunteer service. They are simply marvelous.

*Can you tell me a little about the types of community service Silver Oak students do?*

Well, I live in a community where everyone is a little bit older, and we can't always do things on our own. I remember one of the first community service projects that the students did. A new bakery in town needed a new floor. Silver Oak students enrolled in a construction vocation class wanted to have practical trade experience. The students, under the guidance of their instructor, installed the new

floor to the baker, free of charge. I'll tell you, the baker was so blown away—in return for their hard work and remarkable floor, he gave them all tool belts.

*So, how would you describe the relationship between the students and the community:*

It's like an... extraordinary mentorship where community members see a unique kindness and willingness to serve from the students; and the students experience a feeling of connection and belonging that becomes a big part of their ability to recover, and be successful once they return home.

They've become a true part of Taneytown: they help the Lion's Club with every carnival and fundraising event; they assist the city during the holiday tree lighting by serving hot chocolate and cookies to attendees. Their Culinary Arts students—they are just a marvelous group—host a monthly spaghetti dinner. It's a great night out, and lots of community members attend.

*Can you tell me a little more about this dinner? What is it like? What is so appealing to the community about it?*

Well, for a small fee, the students offer you a full-service dinner. As they serve and pick-up, the adults like to question them about how they are doing in school, what their favorite subject is. You know, it's funny—one woman in town who is a 93-years old, heard about the Silver Oak students from her daughter who goes to the spaghetti dinners all the time. She wanted to buy each student a gift, but we told her that it doesn't work that way. So, she went out and bought Madden, the X-box game because she heard that they had an X-box on campus. We're bringing her to the next spaghetti dinner because she wants to meet the students in person since she's heard so much about them.

*Do you think the students are affected by members of the community?*

I certainly think so. People around here just want to give to the program. In return, the students want to give back. I tend to talk to the shy ones a lot; and one of the students, recently, promised me that he would receive his high school diploma from Silver Oak Academy. But, then the judge changed his plan, and he was sent home. I had no way of knowing if he was going to graduate. I was worried. Then, one day I was in a meeting at the school and I saw this shadow standing behind the door. It was that young man!

I learned that he made special arrangements to return to Silver Oak so that he could graduate, and so he could keep his promise.

# THE STATE OF EDUCATION: BATTLING VIOLENCE IN NEW ORLEANS

Crescent Leadership Academy graduates are proving that words are mightier than the sword. CLA, which works with 7th-12th graders who have been expelled from other schools, offers these students a normalized high school experience, a curriculum which adheres to common core standards and case management/therapeutic supports. CLA is giving youth who have been subject to violence and loss in their lives a reason to believe in the brightness of their own futures.

There is no mistaking New Orleans for any other place — in August of last year, the city saw 19 murders over the course of 18 days. CLA — which opened its doors four years ago, has lost 14 of its students to the violence of its city streets. “[That kind of loss] is very difficult, so we are looking at how we can get more wrap-

“**CLA is giving youth a reason to believe in the brightness of their own futures.**”

around services and how we can engage our students when they're not in our custody, in our care,” said Tracy Bennett-Joseph, CLA Superintendent.

“A lot of the students will call staff in the evenings, the weekends,” said Bennett-Joseph. “We've had students in the past that called staff and said, ‘I'm about to make this decision and if I do, I know the outcome and the staff was able to help them process.’”

CLA Principal Nick Dean is optimistic about the school's progress. He cited the impressive graduation rate (100%) over the past two years. The school has also been witness to notable alumnae success: 2016 graduate Des'Trell Banks is now attending college on a scholarship. While a student at CLA, Banks published her own poetry collection—writing, she said, kept her on track.

# TOP COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS OF 2016

1

## COMMUNITY EMBRACES TRAUMA VICTIMS

Sierra Sage Academy students become integrated into the Mason Valley and Yerington community through their art and altruism. Student-athlete Adrianna assisted in the Lions' efforts to revamp the Lyon County Fairgrounds by designing and developing the new fairgrounds' sign. SSA also hosted an on-campus fundraiser for the Yerington Boys & Girls Club, who later included SSA students in their "Youth of the Year" banquet where the students were honored.

4

## OPENING DOORS THROUGH ART THERAPY

Aligned with our commitment to community involvement, Rite Track has implemented an Art Therapy curriculum that has opened the door to several new community partnerships and opportunities. Art therapy, like community connections, facilitates a student's ability to develop resiliency through the expression of emotion through visual media.

2

## GOVERNOR HONORS BALTIMORE AT-RISK YOUTH

In the season of giving back, the Maryland Governor's Office and the Baltimore Ravens recognized ROP's Silver Oak Academy for their unique and powerful service to the community. Silver Oak Academy was among a handful of community-based organizations honored to receive special recognition during the 17th Annual Honor Rows program for outstanding volunteer service to their communities.

5

## 1.2 MILLION DIAPERS DONATED TO WOMEN'S SHELTER

Uta Halee Academy students participated in a diaper drive for the Lydia House, a shelter for women who have been victims of domestic violence. Students collected diapers to be donated to the drive, and later helped to unload two semi-trucks—roughly 1.2 million diapers—to support families who need assistance meeting their most basic needs.

3

## ROP GRADUATE INVITED TO NFL COMBINE

This Fall, Rite of Passage academics and charter schools fielded nine football teams which played in sanctioned athletic association games across the country. Each game attracted hundreds of family and community supporters. Of those nine teams, two advanced to State Championship games, and eleven students were offered scholarships to play on collegiate teams. One Rite of Passage alumni, Lorenzo Allen, will play in the 2017 NFL Scouting Combine.

6

## BRINGING LITERACY TO ARIZONA LATINO TEENS

Southwest Leadership Academy organized a Donor's Choose Fund to help raise money for new books for students in composition and literature courses. The new books will offer SLA students a more diverse body of literary works from which to choose. The new books will span several countries, and will be written by authors from several different countries and backgrounds.

7

## COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

DePaul Academy recently partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Professors Anre Venter and Lucien Steil on a project titled “Architecture which Hurts, Architecture which Heals,” to teach UND students about the importance of design in juvenile facilities. Notre Dame and DePaul students worked collaboratively each week on a semester-long project that involved psychology, architecture, design and treatment - ultimately tasked with creating their own design proposals for a juvenile facility. The project culminated with a final presentation of the design proposals at the University of Notre Dame campus.

8

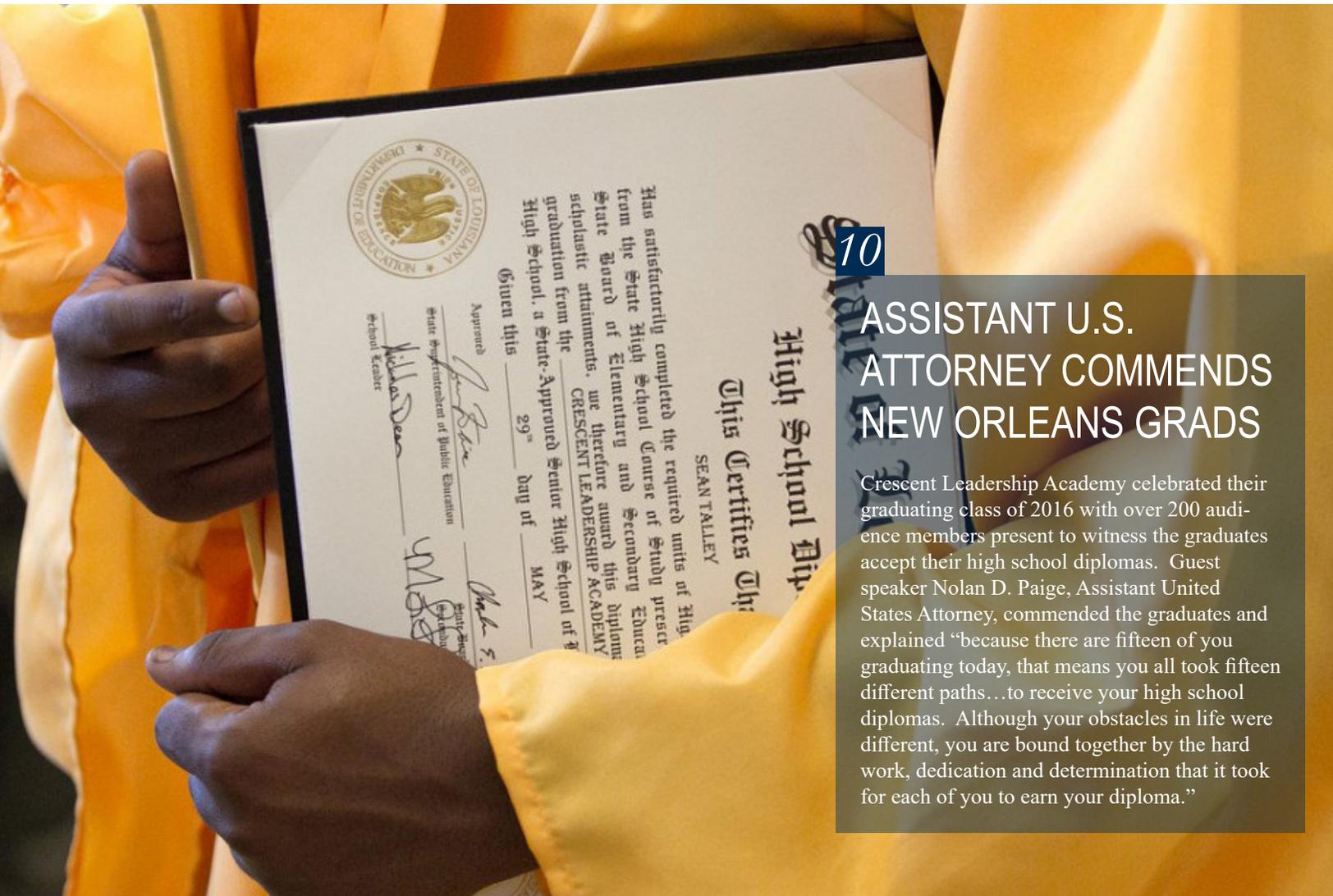
## LAKOTA TRIBE PROVIDES CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Early in 2016, Ridge View Academy students of Native American decent took part in a “Smudging Ceremonies” through a unique partnership with a local Native American tribe. This ceremony is a custom of several indigenous cultures and has been used for centuries as a method of purification and healing by using the smoke from a variety of plants to attract positive energy and to connect people to their own spirituality. The ceremony was a learning opportunity for students to engage in their culture and customs first hand, and Ridge View looks forward to continuing similar events in the future.

9

## PARTNERSHIP BRINGS SOCCER TO SECURE FACILITY

Girls and boys enrolled at the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center participated in an on-campus soccer tournament with local soccer clubs thanks to a strong partnership with the Boys & Girls Club. With the strong support of families, the surrounding community and other visitors (who supported the players with excited cheers from the sidelines) youth who had never played soccer had their chance to score a goal. The five games—the first on October 1st—spearhead an effort to promote normalized, pro-social opportunities for youth, and to increase their engagement in the community.



10

## ASSISTANT U.S. ATTORNEY COMMENDS NEW ORLEANS GRADS

Crescent Leadership Academy celebrated their graduating class of 2016 with over 200 audience members present to witness the graduates accept their high school diplomas. Guest speaker Nolan D. Paige, Assistant United States Attorney, commended the graduates and explained “because there are fifteen of you graduating today, that means you all took fifteen different paths...to receive your high school diplomas. Although your obstacles in life were different, you are bound together by the hard work, dedication and determination that it took for each of you to earn your diploma.”

# RCP

## RITE OF PASSAGE

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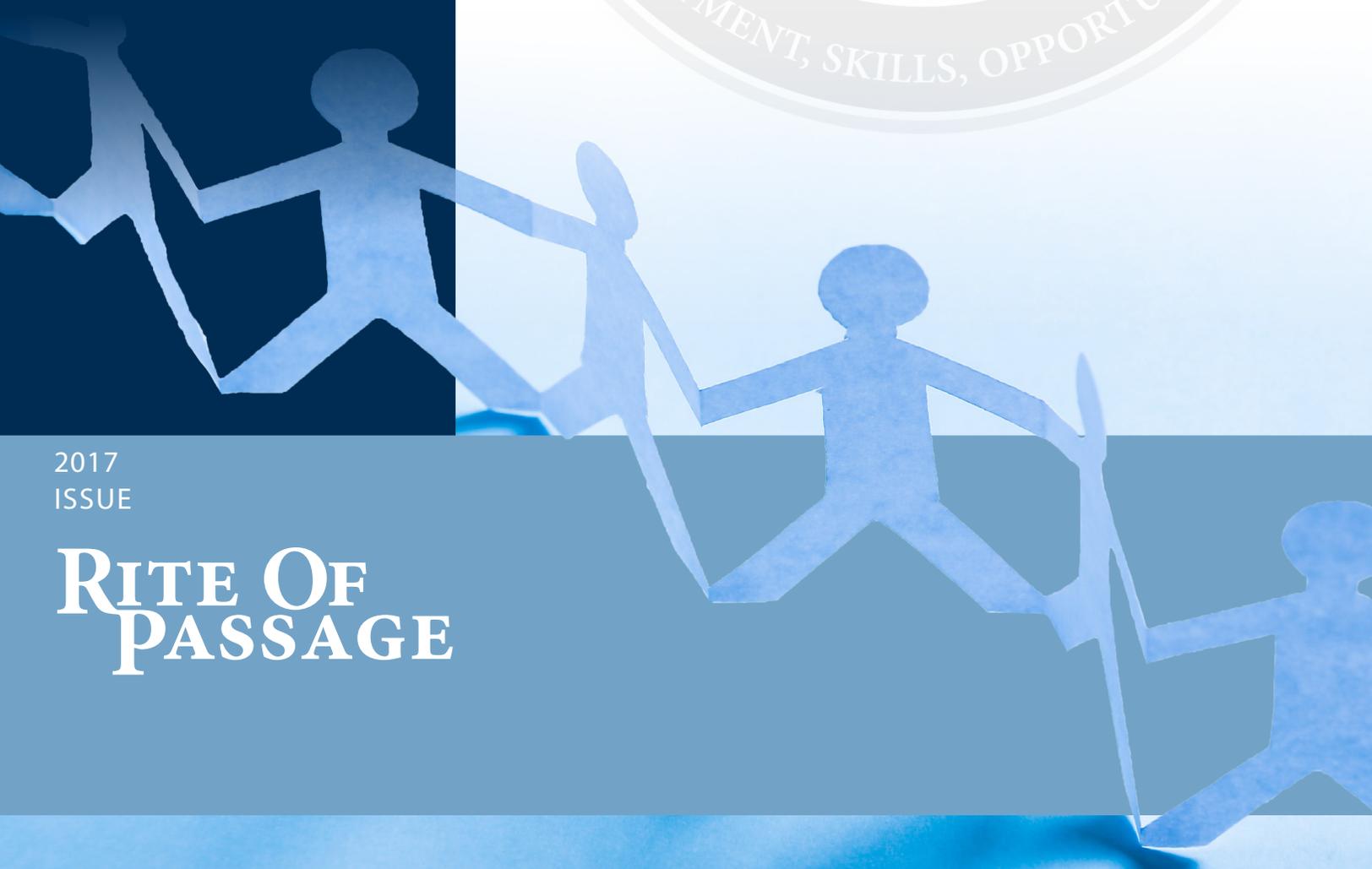
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