

Meeting a Growing Need

More women in our community are seeking a safe, supportive place to heal than ever. Here are three ways we've recently expanded services to reach more women:

ADDITIONAL COUNSELING IN THE EVENING

In fall 2018, we opened our first-ever evening Walk-in Wellness Clinic, and counseling openings immediately reached capacity. In response to the enormous demand, we hired two new part-time therapists to work in the evenings, Elise Gibson, LCSW, and Juanika Howard, MS. We are also seeking additional pro bono counselors to work Tuesday and Thursday nights.

REFERRAL SERVICE PROVIDES BRIDGE TO CARE

Walk-in Wellness Clinics at The Women's Initiative are designed to provide an open door for all women in our community. For those who are uninsured or underinsured, the walk-in session often leads to individual counseling with one of our staff or pro bono therapists. But for women who have options for counseling elsewhere, it can be daunting to figure out how to get connected with the right provider. Our new Referral Support Specialist, Andrea Perez, QMHP-C, is a bridge to care for these women. Working with our clinical team, Perez matches individuals to private-practice clinicians or other community services that are a good fit for each client's unique needs.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH

We're marking milestones with two program partners working with us to improve mental health care for minority communities:

- The individual counseling we provide in-house at the [International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#) enables refugees to access trauma-informed mental health care at a crucial point in their lives in a safe, familiar place. For this work, The Women's Initiative was named the 2019 Virginia Service Partner of the Year by a consortium of state agencies that work with refugees, nominated by the Charlottesville office of the IRC.
- Through our partnership with the [Central Virginia Clinicians of Color Network \(CVCCN\)](#), the organization has launched a trauma treatment clinic for people of color at the Jefferson School.



BETTER CARE, REACHING MORE WOMEN Top, Juanika Howard, MS, center, is a new TWI staff therapist seeing clients in the evenings. She is pictured with fellow members of the Central Virginia Clinicians of Color Network (CVCCN), which recently launched a trauma clinic for people of color. Above, staff of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and The Women's Initiative at an award ceremony honoring TWI's service to refugees.

In tough times, fulfilling the promise of safe, welcoming care

A Message From the Executive Director

Dear friends,

The Women's Initiative is often the starting place for women seeking help with their mental health. Our expanded Walk-in Wellness Clinic schedule provides an open door to care; the excellence of our staff facilitates the positive outcomes. About a third of new clients to The Women's Initiative hear

about us because a friend or family member recommended our services. We are humbled to be a place women trust in times of need not only for their own care but the care of those they love. This is what lowering the barrier to mental health care looks like.

The need for care is growing, in part because—and I think we can all feel it—we are living in hard times. Locally, the second anniversary of the August 11-12 violence aggravates the wounds of racism and anti-Semitism. Our Latinx community



is under exceptional stress due to recent events at the U.S.–Mexico border as well as threats of ICE raids. Across the country, people of all backgrounds are experiencing greater mental health struggles. The suicide rate among girls and women in the U.S. rose 50 percent from 2000 to 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control. On average, one

person dies by suicide every seven hours in Virginia.

In spite of these very real challenges, I am energized by the innovation and dedication of all those who contribute to the mission of The Women's Initiative. In these pages you'll read about the longevity of volunteers in our core programs and the dramatic increase in our ability to reach and serve more women in the first half of this year. You'll read inspirational words from this year's Challenge into Change book and learn

about a unique opportunity to quadruple the impact of your donation.

I'm also reflecting with gratitude on the community partnerships that extend our reach and ability to care for women in need. The steadfast support of organizations like Sentara Martha Jefferson Hospital has made it possible for us to be a crux of the community's mental health safety net. We also greatly value our collaborative programs with Sentara, such as Wellness Tuesdays at the Jefferson School, where individuals can get support for their mental and physical health as well as benefit from mind-body offerings from Common Ground Healing Arts.

As we work to meet the ever-changing challenges of this moment, I thank you for your support and your investment.

Much love,

Elizabeth Irvin, LCSW
Executive Director

WHO WE ARE MISSION

The mission of The Women's Initiative is to provide women with effective counseling, social support and education so they can transform life challenges into positive change and growth.

VISION

All women in our community will have access to innovative, effective, evidence-based mental health care.

VALUES

We believe every woman has an innate capacity for healing that, once uncovered and directed, results in better mental and physical health. We believe it is critical to address each woman's unique emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

THE WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

PH: 434.872.0047 FAX: 434.872.0049

Main Office

1101 E High Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Jefferson School City Center Office

233 4th St NW, Suite W (Second Floor)
Charlottesville, VA 22903

www.thewomensinitiative.org
info@thewomensinitiative.org



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marge Connelly, Chair
 Beverly Colwell Adams, PhD, Vice Chair
 Katherine Brooks, Secretary / Treasurer
 Jeanne Alhusen, PhD, RN
 Drew Beresford
 Amelia S. Black
 Susan Cabell Mains
 Louise McNamee
 Marcela Foshay
 Ginger Graham
 Jim Haden

Bebe Heiner, LPC, Emeritus

Anne Jones

Bruce Murray

Chris Noland

Gloria Rockhold

Carolyn Schuyler, LCSW

CLINICAL STAFF

Joanna Ajax, MA

Education Coordinator & Therapist

Varinia Garcia Anderson, MEd

Bilingual Therapist

Ashley Barlow, LPC

Clinical Services Director

Elizabeth Cobb, LCSW

Social Support Coordinator & Therapist

Judith Curry-El, PhD

Part-Time Therapist

Aisha Hayat, LPC

Clinical Coordinator & Therapist

Juanika Howard, MS

Part-Time Therapist

Elise Gibson, LCSW

Part-Time Therapist

Elizabeth Irvin, LCSW

Executive Director

Ulises Martinez, QMHP

Bienestar Support Specialist

Andrea Mayfield

Client Support Specialist

Andrea Perez, QMHP-C

Client Referral Specialist

Ingrid Ramos, LPC

Bienestar & Resilience Programs Director

Shell Stern, MSW

Therapist

Alyson Stewart, MFT

Sister Circle Coordinator & Therapist

Shelly Wood, MSW

JSCC & Sister Circle Coordinator & Therapist

Emily Zeanah Shelton, LCSW

Therapist

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Kerry Day

Director of Philanthropy

Amanda Korman

Communications & Outreach Coordinator

Amy Lane

Finance Manager

Sarah Medley

Special Projects & Grant Support Specialist

Molly O'Halloran

Operations Manager

Longtime volunteers support TWI through period of growth

Volunteers play a vital role in the success of The Women's Initiative. In 2018, they donated more than 2,900 hours to promoting our vision that all women in our community have access to effective mental health care. Learn about three of our longest-serving volunteers who have been contributing to TWI since its early days, and whose work strengthens three important services.



Binder

PHYLLIS BINDER: Front Desk

After retiring from a career as a psychotherapist, Phyllis Binder sought a way to continue serving the community's mental health needs. She began volunteering at the newly founded Women's Initiative, where a handful of therapists were developing ways of providing mental health care and awareness to populations that hadn't historically had access. More than ten years later, she continues to contribute to what is now a much larger and more diverse organization as a front desk volunteer.

Each Wednesday afternoon, Binder provides a warm welcome to women during our busy Walk-in Wellness Clinic hours. There, she witnesses the positive impact of a woman being able to see a therapist without an appointment when she is in need. She also sees the benefits of women being able to access support groups and mind-body offerings to support their healing—as well as child care for all of the above.

"I enjoy being able to offer a form of support for the delivery of those services by working at the front desk, answering phone inquiries and making a contribution to fulfilling the objectives of TWI in my role as a volunteer," Binder says.

KATHARINE SCOTT GILLIAM: Mind-Body

The Women's Initiative's first location was a house owned by Martha Jefferson Hospital rented to TWI for free.

There, Katharine Scott Gilliam began as a volunteer setting up the Living Room in 2009 as a welcoming gathering space for support groups, mind-body offerings and a lending library. She soon began

offering Alexander Technique, one-on-one instruction that helps release tension and gain more ease and awareness of one's own body when doing activities or any other movement.

When TWI moved into its current building and then renovated its lower level to include a large studio space in 2017, Gilliam was among the first to offer trauma-informed yoga classes such as Chair Yoga, which is taught in a slow, mindful manner.

Mind-body offerings allow clients who have experienced traumatic events to transform their ways of being in their bodies. Slow, mindful yoga helps clients build physical health through strength, flexibility and stamina, Gilliam says. Additionally, it supports mental health, including nervous system resilience and brain function. The result is that clients can learn to "tend and befriend" themselves.



Gilliam

SUSAN SCHIFFER: Knitting Circle

Susan Schiffer originally came to TWI as a volunteer to help set up a lending library, after working in the library at Hampden-Sydney College. She was also a knitter, and had an inkling that the craft could help clients of The Women's Initiative through difficult times by bringing people together and teaching a new skill. That hunch blossomed into the Knitting Circle, which has been offered continuously at The Women's Initiative since Schiffer started the group more than ten years ago.

The Knitting Circle, a part of our Social Support Program, offers a safe, nurturing place for women to cultivate companionship and creativity. Knitting itself can also be very meditative and calming. Participants range in age from just out of high school to their 80s, creating a nonjudgmental, friendly space.

Schiffer no longer leads the group but still attends as a volunteer teaching clients how to knit. What keeps her connected to The Women's Initiative? "I feel like everybody involved is doing what they do out of a sense of real purpose," Schiffer says.



Schiffer

Want to volunteer for TWI?

Contact Volunteer Coordinator Andrea Mayfield:
amayfield@thewomensinitiative.org

Women's stories of hope and healing

Challenge into Change inspires community

Our annual Challenge into Change Writing Contest showcases women's stories of resilience and healing. Read excerpts from winning entries below. For a copy of this year's Challenge into Change book featuring all 70 stories and poems, visit our Main Office.

From "She Calls Me, 'Momma'" by Sheron Sinclair First Place Winner

"...I was all alone. I had no money and nowhere to go upon my release [from incarceration] (two years in the future). Now, there was going to be a baby? Or would there be? Would they take this child from me? Dare I dream of the day when this little one would call me 'Momma?' ... Through a lot of help from an amazing church and my own determination, I have been able to keep that promise. Not only to my daughter, but to myself, my sister, and to my son as well."



of each other
She remember the screams of the children who were too young to realize what happened
She runs until the end of the world
She is different from the rest
She is a target for others
She fights for her soul
The soul that was taken away when she had to leave her family behind
She is reborn
Reborn to seek justice for those in need"

From "Cómo transformo un desafío en un éxito personal" ("How I Transform a Challenge into a Personal Success") by Xochilt Diaz Third Place Winner (Tie)



"...en el camino para llegar a formar parte de las micro-empresarias latinas que pueden triunfar en el exterior, ahora en día me siento muy orgullosa por cada uno de los logros que he obtenido ya que con esfuerzo y dedicación lo he podido realizar,

siendo madre soltera logre poco a poco cumplir cada uno de mis desafíos y demostrar que todo lo que tú quieres se puede hacer si le pones mucho empeño y fuerzas y confianza en Dios."

English translation:

"...On the way to becoming part of the Latin micro-entrepreneurs who succeed abroad, nowadays I feel very proud for each and all of my achievements. With effort and dedication, I have been able to do it; being a single mother and little by little overcoming all of my challenges and showing that everything you want can be done if you put in a lot of effort and strength and trust God."

From "Saved" by Alison Main Third Place Winner (Tie)

"...My redemption is within this admission:

Jesus may have granted you salvation, but that doesn't mean I make you my God.

So, I'm telling you to stop.

And I'm telling myself to stop.

Because my heart is still learning to love.

And you are not a safe place for me to rest."



From "Normal Girl" by Olivia Corianna Winston Second Place Winner



"...Recovery isn't a 'feel good' journey. If you feel shame because you are not loving this process, it's okay to hate it and ponder its worth. The hopelessness as you struggle immensely, the anger, and feelings of being

uncomfortable are expected. It's okay to not comprehend why your smile feels so empty when your stomach is full again. What is guaranteed however, is a life free of restrictions. Reclaim the body that was stolen from you years ago. Fight the belief that your body is not your own and for the admiration of others. Challenge the idea that there is only one type of beauty. The curve of my hips is not a curse but a silhouette of my ancestors."

From "More Than They Think" by Mariam Anwar Third Place Winner (Tie)

"...She came from the war
The war that dislocated her family
She remembered the bodies being piled on top



Two hundred people gathered at Carver Recreation Center in March to hear women's stories of growth and renewal, a part of the Virginia Festival of the Book.

PHOTOS BY MAGGIE WILLIAMS

New grant supports trauma healing

\$367K to enhance our services for crime victims

Early this summer, our agency received exciting news that we have been approved for a two-year grant for \$367,436 annually to support our efforts to provide transformative mental health services for women who have been the victims of crime.

These funds, allocated to the state of Virginia through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), make it possible for us to provide free, life-saving mental health care to women who have been the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other criminal acts.

We estimate that over 90 percent of our clients are victims of crime. The prevalence of

violence and abuse in women’s lives translates to greater mental health need: for example, women are twice as likely to develop an anxiety disorder compared to men. They also attempt suicide approximately twice as often.

“The potential long-term effects of trauma on an individual’s physical and emotional health are well documented,” shares Kerry Day, Director of Philanthropy. *“That said, healing can and does happen.* Through one-on-one work with our therapists, women learn to reconnect with their deepest selves, honor their resilience, foster essential social supports and develop appropriate coping skills.”

I wasn’t able to cope with problems and was greatly overwhelmed. I was afraid to examine myself, thinking I would go down a hole and not get out. I had crisis after crisis and have now developed a trusting, working relationship with my counselor. We are working in tandem to strengthen my coping skills and although life doesn’t get easier, things still go awry, I am separating things from me and am becoming stronger.

— 2019 TWI Client benefitting from VOCA grant

LOCAL MATCH NEEDED!

This generous grant is for the fiscal years of 2020 and 2021. **The Women’s Initiative must secure a mandatory annual local match of \$91,859.** For every \$1 contributed, the grantor provides \$4 more! Contribute today and make 4X the impact.

Donation envelope is enclosed, or visit www.thewomensinitiative.org/donate

Female philanthropists raise record \$95K at Girls’ Night Out

In early May, more than 200 guests gathered at a gorgeous estate for Girls’ Night Out. This sold-out, highly anticipated event has a reputation for delicious food, a stellar art auction, and engaging conversation. In 2019, 24 artists from throughout the southeast donated beautiful pieces in support of our mission. All told, the event raised \$95,000!

Part of the event’s power is that it creates a meaningful opportunity to acknowledge that mental illnesses—depression, anxiety, trauma from past or present abuse—affect us all physiologically the same way, regardless of socioeconomic status. Some women are fortunate to have the resources to access care, others are not. The Women’s Initiative and those who attend Girls’ Night Out are devoted to correcting that inequity by ensuring that EVERY woman in our community receives the mental health care she needs. We thank the hostess, co-chairs and entire committee for making this event our most successful ever.



WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN. Thank you to the 2019 Girls’ Night Out Committee, left to right: Ellen Geismar (hostess), Nicole Lynch, Marcela Foshay, Logan MacKethan (Co-Chair), Christina Teague, Antionette Brewster, Catherine Brown, Carolyn Beach, Colleen Bassett, Louise McNamee, Anne Jones (Co-Chair), Barkley Laing, Bebe Heiner, Katharine Brooks, Carmen Carver. Not pictured: Gardy Bloemers, Scheline Crutchfield, Lynn Dengel, Lauren Gartland, Ginger Graham, Bryce Harris, Alicia Milligan.



Family Barn Party Fundraiser

Sunday, Sept. 29, 4-7 pm
Bellair Farm

Featuring a bull, a bear & a country fair.

Supporting vital mental health care for women in need.



Courage Cold Brew for a Cause

Snowing in Space, 705 W. Main St.

Stop by Snowing in Space Coffee Co. to try the specialty roast developed specifically to benefit The Women’s Initiative.





The Women's Initiative
1101 East High Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

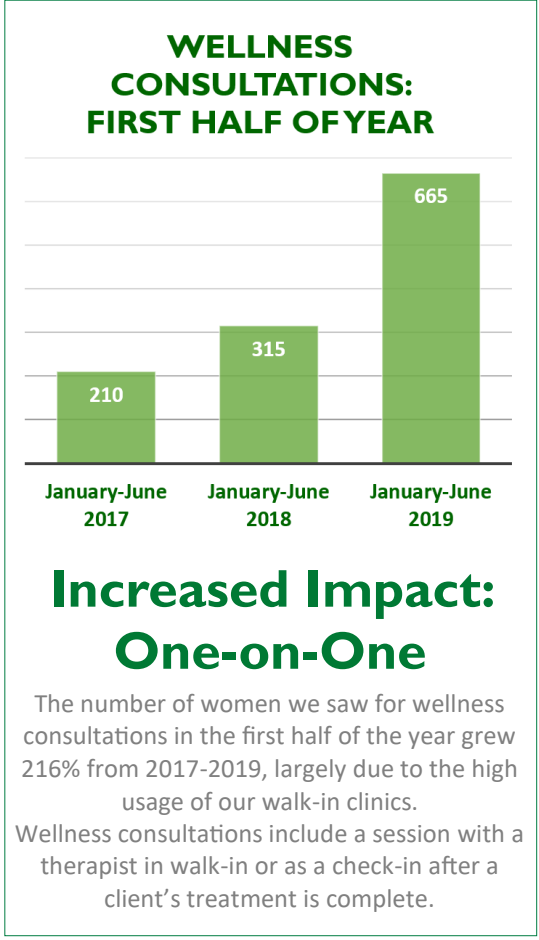
PRSR MKT
U.S. POSTAGE
P A I D
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA
PERMIT NO. 381

*“My life has changed ”
immensely. After several years
of being treated with
antidepressants, Women’s
Initiative trauma-informed
therapists recognized I have
PTSD and treated that with
great results. I am very grateful
for the therapy you provide that
is affordable and accessible. If
not for WI, I would not have
found the correct treatment for
my PTSD and all the suffering
that entails. Thank you!”*
—TWI Client

2019 FALL NEWSLETTER



C'VILLE WALKS WITH HEART: The Women's Initiative is proud to partner with this longstanding community collaboration in which families and individuals gather each summer to walk for health. C'Ville Walks with Heart promotes the mental and physical benefits of exercising together as a community. *Photo by Coe Sweet.*



Write to heal. Share to inspire.

2019-20 Challenge into Change Writing Contest
Submit your essay or poem about a woman in your life (you or someone you know) transforming a challenge into an opportunity for growth and healing. www.thewomensinitiative.org/change