

empowering women in times of challenge and change

SUPPORTING WOMEN'S HEALING

The Women's Initiative provides vital mental health services regardless of ability to pay. In 2019 we served a record **1,118** women in mental health counseling, including **6,237** individual sessions with a therapist. That's almost a **30 percent** increase in the impact of this program over a single year.

More than 90 percent of our clients in individual counseling are survivors of trauma. Gender-based traumas—

sexual assault and domestic violence—are the most common. Our clients are also significantly affected by culturally based traumas including racism and homophobia and traumas related to becoming an immigrant or refugee.

Our model of care prioritizes safety and compassion for the ongoing impact of trauma. We are inspired by a bedrock belief in every woman's capacity to heal.

HERE'S HOW WE SUPPORT WOMEN TO HEAL FROM TRAUMA...

Timely Access to Support

Reduces suffering, prevents symptoms from becoming debilitating patterns

- Walk-in clinics five days a week
- Linkage to counseling with TWI or other community resources

Space to Build Relationships

Supports clients in feeling seen, heard, and understood

- Trusting bond with a therapist
- Friendships form in group offerings



Cultural Humility Approach

Addresses biases that maintain disparities in health outcomes

- Honoring clients' diverse needs and strengths
- Diverse team of therapists lead culturally responsive programs

Mind-Body Offerings

Helps restore sense of bodily safety

- Yoga and dance to release trauma stored in muscles
- Breath work to help regulate nervous system

Psychoeducation Skills

Provides tools to navigate stress day-to-day

- Recognizing symptoms of trauma
- Coping strategies and self-care practices

2019: EXPANDING ACCESS TO THERAPY

27% Increase in # of mental health counseling clients compared to 2018

28% Increase in # of one-on-one counseling sessions compared to 2018

Working Together, We Expand Our Impact

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

When we compiled the program-impact numbers for 2019, the statistics reported on the cover of this newsletter stopped me in my tracks: Almost 30 percent growth in two key metrics of our mental health counseling program, in just one year.

I was in awe, but I wasn't surprised. We had felt that growth all year:

Every seat in our waiting

room full during walk-in clinics. Every therapy office door closed to create the confidential, safe space for women to share their story. An individual-counseling docket where a 5-week wait for a new client is on the low end—demonstrating, once again, that even as we grow, the need for affordable, welcoming mental health care remains large.

We provided care to more women than ever in 2019 because of the support of every part of our agency. I particularly want to highlight the contributions of the following groups:

Our donors. The generous financial support of this community is the key to ensuring that we are a safe space for women to heal.

Our volunteers. Volunteers give at every level of our organization. Administrative support at our front desk, pro bono therapy, event committees and more result in a tremendous extension of our impact.

Our staff. Our therapists are a model of compassion, integrity, and teamwork. Their commitment to the mission of The Women's Initiative is what enables us to do this work.

The women who seek care with us. We provide the space and the tools, but the hard work of seeking help and transforming challenge into change comes entirely from the strength and heart of the women we serve. One client described her growth in this way: *"I'm calmer and stronger. I have many good days, some great days, and a few bad days. I choose to walk away from chaos. I do not walk on eggshells anymore. I've learned boundaries."*

Thank you for your support and belief in The Women's Initiative.

Much love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E.I.R.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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 a capacity for healing that, once supported, results in better mental and physical health for her, her family and our community. We believe it is critical to address each woman's unique emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural needs and strengths. We are committed to providing compassionate care that maintains the highest standard of excellence in an environment that is welcoming, safe and supportive.



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Volunteer Spotlight:

BEVERLY COLWELL ADAMS AND ANNE J. JONES

Our Board of Directors is deeply committed to our mission to provide women with effective counseling, social support and education so they can transform life challenges into positive change and growth. In their own words, two members of our Board recently shared what motivates them to volunteer for The Women's Initiative.



“I am so pleased with The Women's Initiative for making cultural humility a significant part of the strategic plan. Many organizations assume that these issues are included in their strategic plan(s). The Women's Initiative says: No, we are going to make it a clear, visible part of what we're about. That's really important to the growth of TWI.” -Beverly Colwell Adams, PhD, vice chair of Board, chair of Cultural Humility Committee



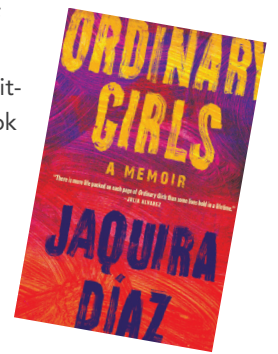
“The care that The Women's Initiative is able to provide to the women in our community is so thoughtfully done. And the agency is not resting on its laurels; it's always moving forward to reach out to women where they are—through groups, one-on-one sessions, classes, walk-in hours. It's an intentionally comprehensive approach. I am humbled and proud to be a part of an organization that cares so deeply about our community.” -Anne J. Jones, co-chair of Development Committee

Voices of Resilience

CHALLENGE INTO CHANGE AT THE FESTIVAL OF THE BOOK



Join The Women's Initiative for an evening of inspiration, courage and wisdom. Our annual celebration of the Challenge into Change Writing Contest at the Virginia Festival of the Book features readings by contest winners and keynote speaker Jaquira Díaz, author of the acclaimed debut memoir *Ordinary Girls*.



“Every once in a while, a truly electric debut memoir comes along, and this fall, *Ordinary Girls* is it... It's the story of an ordinary girl; it's the story of all of the extraordinary girls. Díaz is a skilled writer... from the details to the larger structures of identity, white supremacy, colonialism, and brown, queer, and femme resilience and resistance.” -BuzzFeed

Save the Date

Challenge into Change Celebration

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 6-7:30 PM

Carver Recreation Center | 233 4th St. NW

Witness the power of storytelling as healing, featuring Jaquira Díaz and voices from our annual writing contest.



**SISTER CIRCLE
IMPACT**

2017: 676 women served

2019: 835 women served

**23% growth since the
program began**

Health is More Than Healthcare

The Charlottesville-area assessment of community health needs (known as MAPP2Health) prioritizes *reducing health disparities*. At The Women’s Initiative, we share this goal. Our culturally responsive programming addresses historical and culturally based trauma and inequity.

SISTER CIRCLE PROGRAM: MANY PATHS TO HEALING

Our Sister Circle Program provides opportunities for connection and healing for Black women and women of color. In 2019 the Sister Circle Support Group traveled to the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The trip strengthened members’ bonds to one another and was an opportunity to embrace an inclusive history that values the African American experience.

“The trip to the Museum was Absolutely Life Changing and without a doubt the best DAY of my Life! I left DC with a spark to not only do better for myself but for My People. OUR PEOPLE! So I Thank you all for allowing me to Experience the Experience. It is a moment I will NEVER forget!!”

“Sister Circle was the best group. The bonds have helped me deal with life and stresses better.”

“Women’s Initiative and the Sister Circle have really changed my experience in Charlottesville and in life. The emotions feel like a family reunion and the birthday party scene from ‘Waiting to Exhale.’ Every black woman should attend a Sister Circle Session. Thank you.”

NEW WALK-IN CLINIC AT CITY OF PROMISE

We are proud to partner with City of Promise, a nonprofit that works to end intergenerational poverty and close the achievement and opportunity gap in Charlottesville’s 10th & Page/ Westhaven and Starr Hill neighborhoods. Our Monday morning walk-in clinic now takes place in the City of Promise office on Page Street, creating a welcoming link to care for women in the neighborhood.

“Mental health is not a standalone service, and it helps not only women but their families and children. It’s the idea of supporting the whole person, that continuity of care. We’re partnering with an organization that is already supporting the families, and we are now another link in that support. It’s great to have it all there in one place.” -Shelly Wood, MSW, therapist, co-coordinator of Sister Circle, and coordinator of our Jefferson School office



Family Barn Party Raises \$100K to Support Care for Women

Our 2019 Family Barn Party was a magical afternoon filled with sweet treats, face painting, bull riding, hayrides and more. All told, more than 550 guests and volunteers raised nearly \$100,000 to help ensure that all women in our community have access to trauma-informed, evidence-based mental health care regardless of ability to pay. The Women's Initiative thanks all the families, event sponsors and volunteers who helped make this event memorable, meaningful, and a huge success.

Committee

Erika Jack, *co-chair*
 Natasha Lawler, *co-chair*
 Monica Prichard, *co-chair*
 Maylisa Baldwin
 Carmen Bewley
 Alex Bracey
 Catherine Brown
 Pam Calary
 Hobby Cole
 Kristin Cory
 Cynnie Davis
 Cassie Guy
 Bebe Heiner
 Laurie Kelly
 Sarah Krishnaraj
 Barkley Laing
 Jill Lerner
 Meredith McClellan
 Maggie Noland
 Tricia Ramsey
 Susan Sheeran
 Heather Sieg
 Lily West
 Emily Westlake

Sponsorships

BLUE RIBBON

Manchester Capital Management
 Investment Management of Virginia
 Loring Woodruff Real Estate Associates
 Bellair Farm

RED RIBBON

McGuireWoods
 Bend Yoga
 Red Light Management
 Wells Fargo Advisors

WHITE RIBBON

Atlantic Union Bank
 Carter Bank & Trust
 Jefferson OB/GYN
 Alexander Nicholson
 Volvo Cars of Charlottesville
 Woods Rogers Attorneys at Law
 Snowing in Space



Save the Date

SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S INITIATIVE IN 2020 AT THESE SPECIAL FUNDRAISING EVENTS.

Girls' Night Out Fundraiser

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 6-8PM

Private Home

An event for women who believe in our mission, value local giving and love great art!

Tacos on Tuesday

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 5-8 PM

Sarisand Tile, 1226 Harris St.

"Charlottesville's tastiest pop-up fundraiser" supports TWI this summer!

Family Barn Party Fundraiser

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 4-7 PM

Bellair Farm

Featuring a bull, a bear & a country fair. Supporting vital mental health care for women in need.



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

“Estoy mejor por la ayuda que se me ha brindado (I am better because of the help that you made available to me).”

-2019 Client

2020 SPRING NEWSLETTER
ENCLOSED

Meeting Community Need

According to the 2019 America's Health Rankings (United Health Foundation), frequent mental distress in Virginia increased 21% over the previous four years. Simultaneously, the report named "low rate of mental health providers" one of Virginia's top health challenges. **With your support**, The Women's Initiative's 10 full-time, 3 part-time, and numerous pro bono therapists provide mental health care for women who otherwise would not be able to access it. Thank you for partnering with us to ensure all women receive the care they need.

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