

# Building Resilience

Your support enables The Women's Initiative to strengthen our community in times of challenge and change. Here are four ways we make a difference together..

## EFFECTIVE COUNSELING



Our clinical team provides **evidence-based, trauma-informed care** for those who otherwise would not be able to afford treatment for depression, anxiety and other challenges. 80% of women in counseling at TWI report an increased sense of overall well-being.

## AFFINITY-BASED GROUPS AND SAFE SPACES



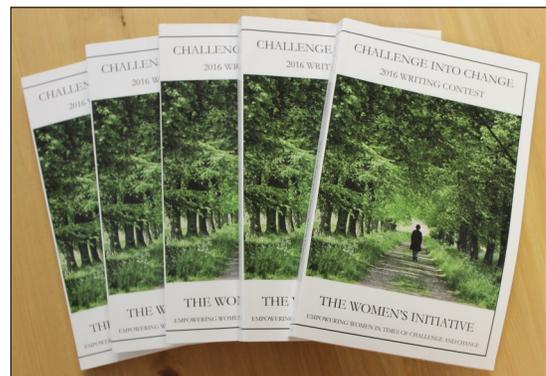
Our support groups provide **healing spaces for women** going through similar life experiences, such as the challenges of new motherhood or getting a divorce. Additionally, our partnership with Wildrock (above) gives clients the chance to heal in nature.

## CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER



In addition to ample support for all our staff and volunteer therapists, we are building **professional networks to support therapists of color** who are on the front lines of providing culturally responsive mental health care in our community.

## STORIES OF HEALING



Our annual Challenge into Change Writing Contest inspires our whole community with essays and poems showcasing **women's resilience and growth**.

# Meeting a Growing Need for Mental Health Care

## *A Message From the Executive Director*

Dear Friends:

Happy New Year! As we ring in 2018, The Women's Initiative is looking back on a year of milestones: we celebrated our tenth anniversary; we expanded our space; we grew our clinical team; and, most importantly, **we served more women than ever before** with vital mental health counseling, social support and education so that they can transform life's challenges into opportunities for change and growth.

In 2018 we hope to exceed our goals again as more women seek mental health services at our agency. It is clear: **the need for affordable, accessible, effective mental health care has never been greater.** As more women take the brave first step of reaching out for help, we thank you for ensuring that The Women's Initiative is there to respond to their call.

For many of our clients, the past year has been a time of significant strife and uncertainty. As ever, we continue to work with women dealing with a range of mental health and personal struggles. There are also many women who have been uniquely affected by local and national political upheaval.

Whatever a woman is going through, **The Women's Initiative creates a safe space for her to heal**—in free walk-in clinics, individual counseling and support groups, such as our Separation & Divorce Group, Sister Circle and a group for victims of the August 12 violence.



Our work is not only about what happens within the walls of our offices. In 2017, The Women's Initiative provided a **leading voice for trauma-informed, culturally responsive care** throughout the community. That work will deepen in 2018 as we strengthen our comprehensive trauma program to bring awareness of all the ways to heal trauma—including therapy, movement, groups and education.

In addition, we are working collaboratively with the Greater Charlottesville Trauma-Informed Community Network and are supporting the **growth of a diverse mental-health workforce** in partnership with the Community Mental Health and Wellness Coalition.

With your support, we are providing **life-saving care to record numbers of women.** And even though we are living in a different time from when The Women's Initiative first opened its doors, the vision of our founder Bebe Heiner is just as relevant: When you empower women in times of challenge and change, you can lift up a whole community.

With love and gratitude,

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

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### Main Office

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Charlottesville, VA 22902

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[www.facebook.com/thewomensinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/thewomensinitiative)

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# Mind-Body Program Helps Women Restore a Feeling of Bodily Safety

## *Treating Trauma Comprehensively Means Holistic Healing*

Trauma is pervasive within our community—upwards of 95% of our clients have been victims of a crime in their lifetime. The Women’s Initiative is responding in kind with a new Mind-Body Program that meets the holistic needs of our clients.

Mental health therapy and social support are essential components in a program that treats women suffering from trauma, yet sometimes these alone are not adequate to heal deeply held wounds. Increasing research testifies to the healing power of yoga and other mindfulness practices. Bessel Van Der Kolk, a professor of psychiatry at Boston University Medical School and a leading researcher in traumatic stress, has found that frequent yoga practice over extended periods of time helps decrease symptoms of PTSD and depression in women.

Yoga and mindfulness practices can help us befriend our bodies and their sensations, release muscular tension instilled not just by everyday stress but by traumatic histories, and use our breath to regulate our nervous systems—all processes that trauma is apt to disrupt.

“We carry trauma systemically—in our gut, in our breath, in our heart, even in our skin,” said Hilary Steinitz, MSW, a mental health therapist at TWI and coordinator of the Mind-Body Program. “Unresolved trauma and emotional injury may make us feel tight, sore, jittery, or breathless. Conversely, we may feel the sensation of lacking sensation—we may feel empty, frozen, or numb. While most everyone experiences these sensations at one time or another, trauma can leave us trapped and stuck within such physical experiences, or can cause us to careen from one physical extreme to another. As the result of trauma and its physiological imprint, our bodies might not feel like safe places to be.”



**Katharine Scott Gilliam teaches Chair Yoga at The Women’s Initiative, a gentle and therapeutic offering that promotes strength, flexibility, healing and mindful attention.**

Mind-body programming at TWI is free and open to all women and all bodies. Though any community yoga or mindfulness class can help one to heal, a trauma-sensitive program is unique in that it puts particular emphasis on cultivating physical and emotional safety. In TWI mind-body classes, all “instructions” are really invitations: a participant is as free to exit a pose or a movement or the room as she is to enter it. And this invitation is itself part of the healing, enabling a sense of physical and emotional agency that the traumatized body may have forgotten.

“As the result of trauma and its physiological imprint, our bodies might not feel like safe places to be.”

—Hilary Steinitz, MSW, coordinator of TWI’s Mind-Body Program



## MENTAL HEALTH PUBLIC AWARENESS & STIGMA REDUCTION

The Women's Initiative is a member of the Community Mental Health & Wellness Coalition, which recently launched a public awareness and stigma reduction campaign. **Help Happens Here** includes advertisements like the one at left that appear in print media, online and on public transportation. Help Happens Here makes it easier for anyone in our region to connect with affordable mental health and substance use services through a website and referral telephone line.

**[www.helphappenshere.org](http://www.helphappenshere.org)**  
**434-227-0641**

### Volunteer Spotlight: Monica Luna

## Promoting healthy living in the Latino community

The Trauma-Informed Cross-Cultural Psychoeducation Program (TICCP) empowers community leaders with the capacity to improve the health of their community. The Women's Initiative has been implementing this health curriculum, developed by Dr. Hyojin Im of the VCU School of Social Work, with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to help immigrant and refugee communities thrive.

Monica Luna, a Spanish interpreter for the IRC and UVA Health System, participated in TICCP in Spring 2017, and since that time has been teaching healthy living skills to the Latino community in the Southwood neighborhood of Charlottesville and in Lovingston through The Women's Initiative's Bienestar program.

Additionally, Luna has connected her husband, the cardiologist Dr. Max Luna, with the TICCP curriculum. Through the UVA Latino Health Initiative Dr. Luna is now collaborating with The Women's Initiative to deliver this training to Promotores de Salud (Health Promoters)—in December thirteen Health Promoters graduated from the program.

### Tell us about the Community Health Worker workshops you've facilitated in the Latino community.

It was very rewarding to see how the women came the first day—they were all strangers and shy, they wouldn't speak much—and then throughout the program they opened up. We went through how to recognize emotions that are present in our lives every day that we don't necessarily know how to express—sometimes they become so



powerful that it makes people depressed. We also encourage people to ask for help. Latinos, now more exposed to discriminatory actions, are afraid to ask for help. Additionally, asking for help can be perceived culturally as a weakness, so when you understand it's not a weakness it turns out to be a more powerful thing—you impact someone's life.

### Why did you decide to volunteer for TWI?

I first met Ingrid Ramos when she was at a health fair at Southwood promoting The Women's Initiative's services. She mentioned offering training for people who were interested in helping other women with stress and trauma-related suffering. I said, well, I'm not a clinician, I don't have experience in that field, I am just a Spanish interpreter. But at that moment I was working actively with the IRC, and one of the things that I

noticed while covering appointments for them was the amount of stress that refugee families tend to experience—and I felt they could benefit from more guidance in what other resources they could tap into to cope with stressful situations in their families.

### What do you like about doing this work?

I see the motivation that women have towards learning and making changes that will help their families and themselves. Despite not having formal education in mental health, this training has inspired me to continue learning and offer my time for this very important cause. You impact people's lives and hopefully it will translate to better health and well-being for our community.

# Family Barn Party raises \$95K for life-saving care



Blue skies, cool weather and hours of country fair fun...these are the words that describe this year's Family Barn Party. The turnout was our largest ever with more than 500 kids & adults in attendance. Collectively—through ticket sales, leaves for our family tree and sponsorships—we raised \$95,000!

The creative contributions and planning prowess of co-chairs **Kristin Cory, Barkley Laing, Holen Lewis and Monica Prichard**, as well as the dedicated support of committee members and volunteers, made it all possible. Throughout the year, volunteers contributed 1500+ hours to ensure success. Whether sewing bunting, arranging flowers, flipping hot dogs, preparing honey jars, signing invitations, recruiting bull riders, or greeting guests...our volunteers were AMAZING.

The Women's Initiative is so grateful to all those who contributed to this year's event. THANK YOU. Your belief in our mission is truly saving lives.

*"Mom, this was the best day of my life." —Ward, age 5*

To relive the memories or get an enticing glimpse into our annual Family Barn Party, please visit us at [www.thewomensinitiative.org](http://www.thewomensinitiative.org).

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Maylisa Baldwin
- Dorothy Batten
- Marie Bourgeois
- Catherine Brown
- Karen Chapman
- Kristin Clarens
- Hobby Cole
- Bridget Davis
- Cynnii Davis
- Marcela Foshay
- Holly Hatcher
- Bebe Heiner
- Christy Hickey
- Jessie Kostelnik
- Amy Lastinger
- Natasha Lawler
- Jill Lerner
- Maggie Noland
- Sarah Gray Parrish
- Emily Westlake

## SPONSORS

Generous contributions from corporate sponsors ensure that 100% of event proceeds goes directly to vital mental health services for women in need. We thank the following companies for their philanthropic giving and compassionate support. Our agency and our community are stronger because of their giving.

**BLUE RIBBON**  
Manchester Capital



**RED RIBBON**  
Bend Yoga



Investment Management of VA  
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Quantitative Investment Management  
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**WHITE RIBBON**  
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## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTORS

- |                          |                  |                              |
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| Crozet Fire Department   | La Flore         | The Photo Booth Company      |
| Early Mountain Vineyards | Local Food Hub   | VA Tent Rental               |
| Erika Jack               | Orpha Events     | Veritas Vineyards and Winery |
| Festive Fare             | Pearl Island     | Wells Fargo                  |
| Foxboro Farm             | Plow & Hearth    | Wiley Brothers Belts         |
| Gallatin Canyon          | Shenanigans Toys |                              |





## HEALING CULTURALLY BASED TRAUMA

In December, as part of our goal to increase our community's capacity to provide culturally responsive mental health care, The Women's Initiative provided a free clinical training to more than thirty local therapists, led by Mark Nickerson, LICSW.

The Women's Initiative  
Challenge into Change



## SAVE THE DATE

CHALLENGE INTO CHANGE  
at the Festival of the Book

Wednesday, March 21, 6 pm

*Witness the power  
of storytelling as healing*

## Self-Care List

Strategies and ideas for taking care of yourself



- ❖ Make time to be still and quiet
- ❖ Eat slowly and mindfully
- ❖ Drink water throughout the day
- ❖ Protect your time for sleeping
- ❖ Create a beautiful workspace with plants, pictures & special items
  - ❖ Take time out when sick
- ❖ Spend time with pets and loved ones
  - ❖ Take time to cultivate friendships
- ❖ Find someone who supports you in listening to your true feelings
  - ❖ Make room for creativity in your life
  - ❖ Take time to learn about new things
- ❖ Pray, meditate and/or spend time in nature
  - ❖ Allow yourself to try new things
  - ❖ Ask for help when you need it
  - ❖ Say "no" to what drains you
- ❖ Commit to something that feels bigger than you

## SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT SELF-CARE

Our clients, program partners and health care providers in the community hang up our Self-Care List in their homes and offices as a daily reminder of how to cope with stress and make room for joy. And in the aftermath of Aug. 11-12, our Self-Care List was read by over 7,000 people on Facebook and Twitter.

Clip out a copy for yourself or someone you love. Thank you for supporting effective, affordable, accessible mental health care for every woman in our community.