

empowering women in times of challenge and change

RESPONDING WITH RESILIENCE

In a pandemic year that took its toll on our community's mental health, our compassionate care via telehealth provided a lifeline to many.



Executive Director Elizabeth Irvin, Founder Bebe Heiner, and Board Development Committee Chair Anne J. Jones show their support for staff at our Main Office.

MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT OF COVID-19

- Fear about getting sick
- Grief over illness and loss
- Anxiety around economic impact
- Isolation due to social distancing and restrictions on gatherings and travel
- Disproportionate impact on women and people of color:
 - For women, greater rates of job loss and increased caregiving burdens with children out of day care/school
 - For Black and Latinx communities, systemic inequities lead to greater exposure and worse health outcomes
 - Racist violence against Black and Asian American communities exacerbates trauma
- A CDC survey found that 41% of Americans are struggling with mental health issues related to COVID, including substance use, symptoms of depression or suicidal thoughts.



OUR ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY SAFELY

Walk-in Clinics became Call-in Clinics

Individual counseling provided over phone or video calls

Social support and mind-body offerings offered over Zoom

Education and outreach through webinars, social media, and YouTube, plus TV, radio and print news

Supporting staff resilience to avoid burnout

“Agradezco el apoyo brindado primero por Usted y ahora por el servicio que brinda online el Centro. First, I appreciate your support and second, to the agency for the service that you are offering now online.” -2020 Client

Strengthening Our Commitment to Community Care

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As we enter the second year of the pandemic, The Women's Initiative remains steadfast in providing vital mental healthcare for our community. It has not been an easy time for anyone. We have each faced our own unique struggles and challenges—losing loved ones to COVID, experiencing economic instability and job

losses, facing down continuing racism and brutality, and so much more. And yet I remain inspired and in awe of the resilience and courage I witness each day: how people continue to find the strength to care for children, support a neighbor in need, and seek hope and meaning during these difficult days.

We have stayed focused on our mission and even grown our staff to try to meet the increased needs in the community. Our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan centers cultural humility in all of our efforts. During this three-year period we commit to:

Grow our capacity to meet greater mental health need during and post-pandemic

Improve access and outcomes for communities impacted by systemic inequities

Promote resilience for our staff and caregivers communitywide

Enhance clinical and operational systems with a commitment to cultural humility throughout the organization

In the first year of this plan alone we are projecting to boost the number of counseling sessions we provide by 25%. This is a major step toward ensuring access to care for all who need it, especially as we begin to turn toward pandemic recovery. I'm also excited about the recent addition of Melody Pannell as our Resilience Educator and Therapist (see page 3) who is providing resources and supports for fellow nonprofits and the broader community affected by the pandemic and the impacts of racism and oppression. Page 4 highlights our organizational efforts to build an inclusive and equitable organization.

There is much work left to be done, yet our team is unwavering in our agency's vision: that all women in our community will have access to innovative, effective, evidence-based mental health care.

Much love,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Irvin'.

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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Main Office

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Charlottesville, VA 22902

Jefferson School City Center Office

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info@thewomensinitiative.org

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Amy Lane
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Andrea Mayfield

Self-care for the Front Line

NEW RESILIENCE EDUCATOR SUPPORTS CARE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR



A new position at The Women's Initiative is all about building resilience in those most impacted by the pandemic and culturally based trauma.

Melody Pannell, MSW, M.Div., MACE, joined our agency this January as the first Resilience Educator and Mental Health Therapist. She brings vast experience in teaching resilience, healing for communities of color, and radical self-care.

She is providing free educational workshops that teach vital self-care and stress management skills for frontline providers and communities of color. One important focus is care for the caregiver and the prevention of vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue. Her goal is to connect participants to resources within themselves and their community to support well-being and build hope during these challenging times.

Workshops can be tailored for the general public or specific community organizations. Furthermore, they can be designed for agency leaders looking to build capacity for resiliency or for caregivers who need support in daily programs and services. They can be formatted as a 1-hour presentation, 2-3 hour workshop, or staff retreat.

"We are focusing on safety and keeping calm. On being a non-anxious presence. On staying connected even though we've been socially distancing." -Melody Pannell, in a recent virtual panel called "Building Resiliency During a Pandemic" hosted by the Greater Charlottesville Trauma-Informed Community Network.

Spreading Hope

Since starting as the TWI Resilience Educator in January, Melody has provided workshops or begun a collaborative process with the following organizations...

- Blue Ridge Health District
- Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- Greater Charlottesville Trauma-Informed Community Network
- The Haven
- JMU Center for Multicultural Student Services
- UVA Women's Center
- UVA Public Service Week
- UVA Clinical & School Psychology Program

**We want to partner with you! Interested in a workshop for your agency?
Contact Melody at mpannell@thewomensinitiative.org.**

TWI Cultural Humility Commitment Statement

Cultural humility works to address the assumptions, values and biases that lead to health disparities and inequality. The Women's Initiative commits to a cultural humility approach throughout our organization in order to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion, with a specific focus on antiracism efforts. Our goal is that this commitment supports us in building authentic and healing relationships across difference with our clients, the communities we serve, and our colleagues in order to fully realize our mission, vision, and values. We specifically envision that this approach will improve health access and outcomes, thereby reducing health disparities.

Walking the Talk of Cultural Humility

TAKING CONCRETE STEPS TO CREATE A SAFE, WELCOMING PLACE FOR CLIENTS

To make the above statement of commitment a reality, we are implementing a Cultural Humility Plan of Action that includes specific tactics, metrics, timelines and persons responsible for our cultural humility objectives, all overseen by Executive Director Elizabeth Irvin, LCSW, and Deputy Director Andrea Mayfield.

FOCUS AREAS OF THE PLAN OF ACTION:

Internal organizational culture

Cultivate a diverse team and an inclusive work environment

Client impact

Prioritize diversity and inclusion in our programming, and equity in access and outcomes

Policy and Operations

Ensure our systems and processes promote cultural humility; diversity, equity and inclusion; and antiracism

Community Engagement

Work collaboratively with partners outside our agency to promote these values

RECENT EXAMPLES OF THE CULTURAL HUMILITY PLAN OF ACTION AT WORK INCLUDE:

- Incorporating cultural humility objectives into our 2021-23 Strategic Plan
- Prioritizing diversity in staff leadership
- Providing new offerings in response to ongoing racist violence
- Facilitating antiracist learning for Staff and Board of Directors through the *Racial Healing Handbook* by Anneliese A. Singh
- Staff participating in monthly discussion groups to engage in conversations across difference and promote racial healing



“Our team recognizes the cumulative effects of racism and oppression across the spectrum and intersection of human identities, and we are committed to purposefully identifying, discussing, and challenging the impact they have on our organization and the clients we serve. I am inspired by our efforts and look forward to finding more ways to bring this work to the larger community.”

—Deputy Director Andrea Mayfield

Girls' Day Out

ART SHOW & NATURE WALK WITH FRIENDS

SUNDAY, MAY 2, 1-5PM | BROOM HOLLOW FARM

Taking place on acreage just outside of Charlottesville and featuring pieces from 24 celebrated artists, this ticketed event ensures that all women in our community have access to trauma-informed, evidence-based mental health care regardless of ability to pay.

Scheduled 15-minute art viewings for groups of 10 will be tiered throughout the afternoon to ensure safety. Once art viewing is complete, guests can walk wooded trails and enjoy the healing power of nature.

To view all of the artwork, make a special gift, or purchase tickets, visit www.thewomensinitiative.org/2021-GDO

Amazing Event Committee

Carolyn Beach
Mary Blanton
Antoinette Brewster
Katharine Brooks (Co-Chair)
Catherine Brown
Carmen Carver
Kristin Cory
Scheline Crutchfield
Marcela Foshay
Lauren Gartland
Ginger Graham
Bryce Harris
Bebe Heiner
Erika Jack
Anne Jones
Barkley Laing (Co-Chair)
Logan MacKethan
Ann Marie Park
Louise McNamee (Hostess)
Monica Prichard
Christina Teague
Railey Testerman
Cate West Zahl

Amazing Artists

Isabelle Abbot
Lyndi Angermeier-Carr
Vicki Brown
Carolina Coto
Scheline Crutchfield
Gray Dodson
Jennifer Duncan
Michelle Gagliano
Lauren Moses Gordon
Ellen Hathaway
Logan MacKethan
Georgia Mason
Carol Anna Meese
Lisa Neher
Edie Read
Ana Rendich
Donna Robertson
Kim Robertson
Billie Rosenberger
Krista Townsend
Marisa Vrooman
Priscilla Whitlock
Molly Wright
Cate West Zahl



Carolina Coto | *The Garden*



Michelle Gagliano | *Blue Skies Coming*



Jennifer Duncan | *Hogweed*

THE FOLLOWING BUSINESSES AND ART GALLERIES
MAKE THIS YEAR'S EVENT POSSIBLE.



David Day
architect





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

"I can't imagine how I would've managed everything during this pandemic without your benevolent help."

-2020 Client

2021 SPRING NEWSLETTER
ENCLOSED

Outreach & Stigma Busting via the Media

Our clinicians connect with local and national news outlets to ensure that expert information about mental health reaches our whole community. Here are a few highlights from a year of adding a trauma-informed, culturally responsive perspective to coverage of the pandemic and systemic inequality:

"Find where you are on that spectrum: How is the pandemic affecting me? Allow yourself to see what you're feeling, without comparing yourself to how other people are experiencing it."

-Joanna Ajex, LPC, Therapist, quoted in C-VILLE, "Fighting insomnia in the age of COVID," May 2020

"We're constantly working to break down the stigma of 'Black people don't go to therapy,' that [therapy] is something for 'crazy' people." -Juanika Howard, MS, LMHP-E, Sister Circle Therapist, quoted in Vinegar Hill Magazine, "Still Determined: Mending Minds of Color," February 2021

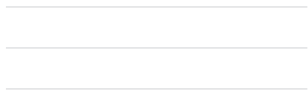
"When you feel anxious and overwhelmed and everything seems out of control, making the decision to wear a mask is one way you can feel that you're doing something positive for yourself. It can feel like a proactive step: You're doing something to increase



Photo: Lorenzo Dickerson / Vinegar Hill Magazine

your safety and that of others." -Elizabeth Irvin, LCSW, Executive Director, quoted in The Daily Progress, "Area sees complaint of 200 maskless faces," July 2020

"As a bicultural counselor, it's important to remember that every culture has its own way of speaking about symptoms, illness and treatment." -Ingrid Ramos, LPC, Resilience and Bienestar Programs Director, quoted in Counseling Today, "Wanted: Bilingual and Bicultural Counselors," January 2021



The Women's Initiative

1101 E High Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

**Thank you for partnering with us to provide vital
mental health services to women in our community!**



_____ **\$10,000**

_____ **\$5,000**

_____ **\$2,500**

_____ **\$2,000**

_____ **\$1,500**

_____ **\$1,000**

_____ **\$500**

_____ **\$250**

_____ **\$100**

_____ **\$Other**

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May we list your name in our publications and newsletters in honor of your generosity?

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The Women's Initiative is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and your contributions are tax deductible as defined by the IRS.