



The  
**Women's**  
**40** Center  
years



What an amazing testament to our community and the support you have given that The Women's Center has stood for over four decades. In those 42 years, a lot has changed in our world – yet what remains constant is our need for compassionate care when dealing with some of life's most difficult challenges and transitions. Addressing these needs is at the heart of the mission of The Women's Center – and through collaborative efforts with individual, corporate, academic, community and government partners, the Center met those needs for over 4,500 women, men and children last year alone.

Providing services on a sliding fee scale for counseling, financial, career and legal education, mediation and domestic violence advocacy throughout the metropolitan area, The Women's Center is one of the few remaining community service organizations providing affordable mental health care.

Consider a few of the sobering statistics that highlight the need for the Center's core services:

- Mental illness is the leading contributor to disability in the U.S. population, responsible for 13.6% of years lost to illness, disability, or premature death (third behind cardiovascular disease and neoplasms) (source: National Institute of Mental Illness, 2014);
- 18.9% of adults in the U.S. experience a mental illness in any given year;
- 8.5% of children ages 2 to 17 suffer from an emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorder requiring treatment or counseling;
- 17% of students *thought about* attempting suicide; 4% reported they *attempted* suicide (source: Fairfax County Youth Survey, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades);
- 10-15% of people will experience severe mental health reactions during bereavement;
- 25% - 33% of women and approximately 7.6% of men in America become victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives;
- 1.5% of women and .9% of men are raped by their partners each year; and
- Annually, domestic violence costs 37 billion dollars when emergency care, legal costs, police work and lost productivity are factored in (source: *Ibid.*).

Founded on a recognized need to help our neighbors, The Women's Center is a testament to the unstoppable force of those *wanting* to help and then *doing* something to make a difference. In 2015, we provided 5,871 hours of reduced-fee or free services and together we will continue this work to impact the lives of the thousands we serve.

As we seek to continually reach our community members in need, we invite you to support our efforts to change lives for the better.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shirley M. Clark".

Shirley M. Clark  
CEO & Executive Director



[www.thewomenscenter.org](http://www.thewomenscenter.org)

**In Virginia:** 133 Park Street, N.E., Vienna, VA 22180 **P** 703.281.2657 **F** 703.242.1454

**In Washington, DC:** 1025 Vermont Ave. NW Ste. 310 Washington, DC 20005 **P** 202.293.4580 **F** 202.293.4583



## **Content**

Annual Report.....	1-4
About The Women's Center .....	5
The Women's Center Services .....	6
Washington Post: Interview with The Women's Center .....	7
Article: Outcomes are Only Part of the Story .....	8
Client Profile: Romy's Story.....	9
Clinical Internship Program: Perspectives on The Women's Center .....	10
Strategic Look Ahead .....	11

# ***IMPACTING OUR COMMUNITY***

***The Women's Center 2015 Annual Report***



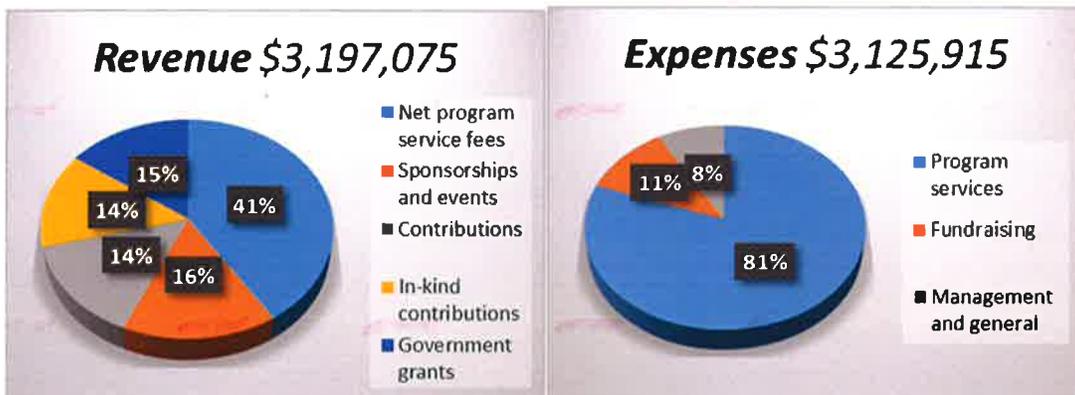
***Serving the mental health and well-being of the community since 1974***



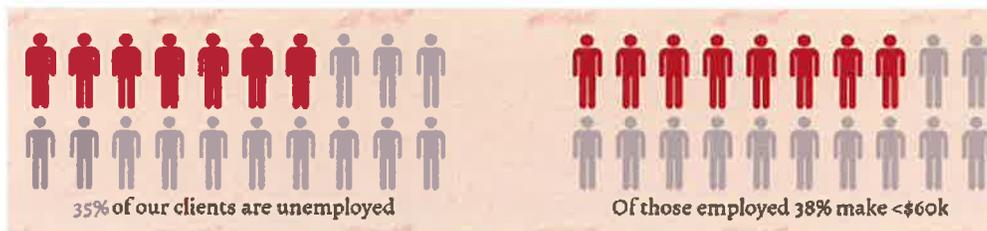
***In 2015, The Women's Center served over 4,500 women, men, children and teens in our community.***



***To sustain community educational programs and subsidize low-cost counseling services, The Center relies on diversified funding sources. These sources include fund-raising events, grants, corporate sponsors, individual donors, and full-fee and insurance-reimbursed therapy sessions.***



***Through some of life's toughest challenges and transitions, community members find their way to The Women's Center.***



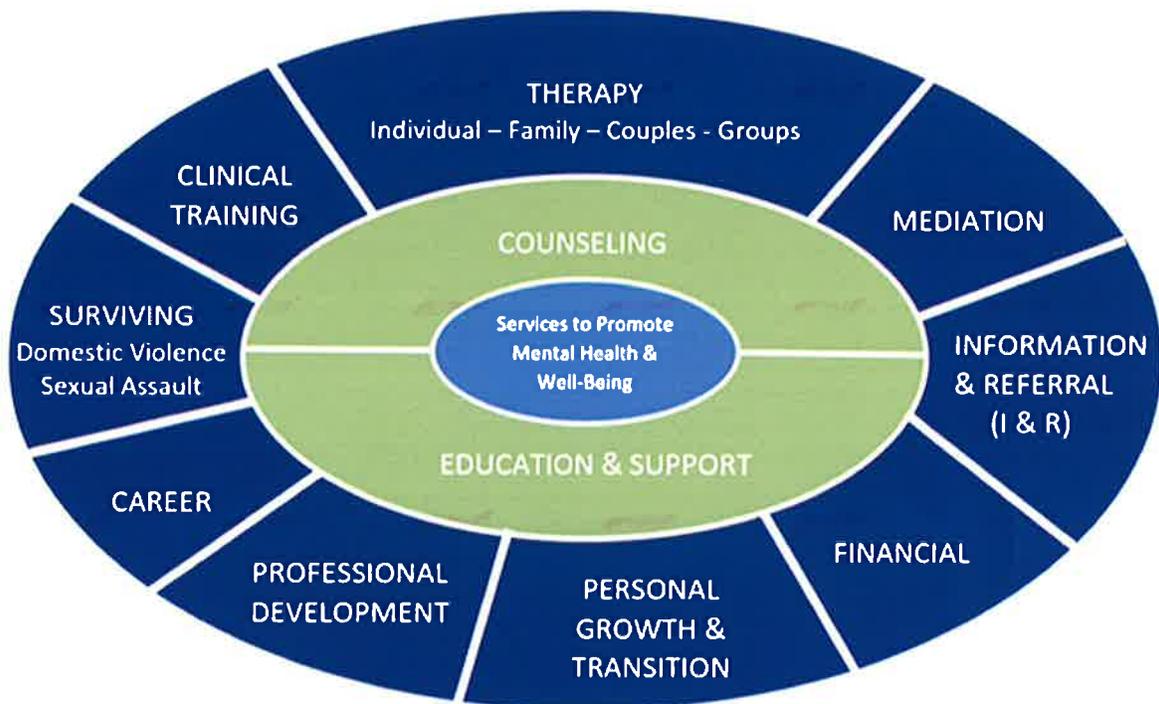
***We thank the many partners, donors and volunteers who make these services possible.***

### **Major Sponsors and Contributors**

***The following includes gifts and sponsorships from individuals, organizations and foundations contributing \$5,000 or more in support of the Center's services.***

<b>\$25,000 and above</b>		
CGI Federal, Inc.	D.A. Fletcher Revocable Trust	Nicole and Harry Geller
<b>\$15,000 - \$24,999</b>		
Accenture Federal Services American Institutes for Research Attain, LLC	AT&T Government Solutions Cisco Systems, Inc. Neall Family Charitable Foundation	Reed Smith United Way
<b>\$10,000 - \$14,000</b>		
Patricia and Joseph Barta Martha Beltran Blue Canopy Capital One	Clark-Winchcole Foundation Deloitte & Touche Jasmin El Kordl and Michael Yun	Morgan Stanley Northrop Grumman Lissa and John Perez
<b>\$5,000 - \$9,999</b>		
Access National Bank AGS Amazon Web Services ASM Research Inc. Baker Tilly Virchow Krause LLP Greg and Camille Baroni BMC Software Booz Allen Hamilton Cisco Foundation Michele Cross and David Minnick Evans Incorporated Karen and John Fagelson	Jeri and Joseph Fellerman Harris Corporation Harrity & Harrity, LLP KPMG LMI Government Consulting Lockheed Martin Ed Meehan Nathan Associates, Inc. Nordstrom SAP NS2 Janalyn Schreiber Surovell Isaacs Levy & Petersen PLC	The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia/Saefer, Blaustein, Hargrove Fund The Community Foundation – McGregor Links Charitable Gift Fund The Meltzer Group, Inc. The Titmus Foundation, Inc. Toni Townes-Whitley Kerry Ward WGL/Washington Gas Wells Fargo

## The Women's Center's Services



## Board of Directors

**Affie Ambrose**

Acumen Solutions

**Greg Baroni**

Attain, LLC

**Susan Chodakewitz**

Nathan Associates, Inc.

**Jasmin El Kordi**

NCR

**Susan M. Evans, Ph.D.**

Evans Incorporated

**Karen C. Fagelson, Vice-Chair**

**Jeri A. Fellerman**

Eagle Bank

**Leslye S. Fenton**

Oxlin, Feldman & Pittleman, P.C.

**Nicole Geller**

**Diane Gongaware**

Cisco Systems, Inc.

**Cory F. Goriup**

Surovell Isaacs

**Petersen & Levy PLC**

**Carol Honigberg**

Reed Smith LLP

**Lori Jenkins, Vice-Chair**

**Madelyn Jennings**

McGregor Links

Foundation

**Phyllis Kohlmann**

Licensed Professional

Counselor

**Mary White Kudless**

M.S.N. PMHCNS-BC

**Ed Meahan**

Accenture Federal

Services

**Lissa T. Perez, Treasurer**

**and Secretary**

Deloitte & Touche LLP

**Moshe Pridan**

Sirius XM

**Anne Rieger**

Signature Partners,

Inova

**Vicki Schmanske**

Lockheed Martin

**Stacy M. Schwartz**

AT&T Government

Solutions

**Sally Turner, President & Board Chair**

CGI Federal

**Katherine Wiernicki**

Baker Tilly Virchow

Krause, LLP

**STAFF: Executive**

**Director and CEO**

**Shirley M. Clark**



The Women's Center | [www.thewomenscenter.org](http://www.thewomenscenter.org)

133 Park Street NE, Vienna, VA 2210 | 703.281.2657

1025 Vermont Ave NW; Suite 310; Washington, D.C. 20005 | 202.293.4580



# THE WOMEN'S CENTER

CELEBRATING MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

The mission of The Women's Center is to significantly improve the mental health and well-being of all members of the community through counseling, education, support, and advocacy.

Founded in August 1974, The Women's Center is a unique service provider dedicated to significantly improving the psychological, career, financial, and legal well-being of individuals and families in the Washington DC region. We offer counseling, education and support services to help clients transition through times of personal challenge so they can go on to live healthy, stable, and productive lives. Our two locations—Vienna, VA and Washington, DC—offer compassionate, comprehensive services to ensure that clients from all segments of the DC Metro community receive a high level of care, regardless of their ability to pay.

Each year, The Women's Center works with thousands of men, women, teens, and children who take advantage of our breadth of services. No matter how wide our circle of care becomes, our core—our heart—is centered on the person in need of counseling and support. In 2015, The Women's Center served more than 4,000 people, many of whom are offered therapy and information at a low fee or no fee. The Center provides a sliding fee scale to maintain accessibility to those in need no matter their financial situation.

## What types of services does The Women's Center provide?

- Our services include individual and group mental health therapy, advocacy and a broad range of workshops addressing personal and professional development, teen challenges, financial education, divorce matters, aging, job-finding fundamentals and more. We have also established an Adult Intern Program to help individuals enter or re-enter the workforce.
- We collaborate through public and private partnerships to increase our ability to respond to the urgent needs of domestic violence and sexual assault victims in our area, providing services for over 600 survivors each year.
- Over 700 women and men attend our Annual Leadership Conference, where leaders and subject experts provide a rich day of learning and inspiration to help women across our community develop their own leadership potential.
- Through a special program, "The Leadership Center", services for well-being are offered in the workplace throughout the region, expanding the Centers reach.

## What are the benefits of these services?

The Women's Center is a Circle of Care in the community where...

...a family navigating a crisis can find stability.

...a person who has lost a job can find the educational resources, mentoring, and support groups needed to get back into the workforce.

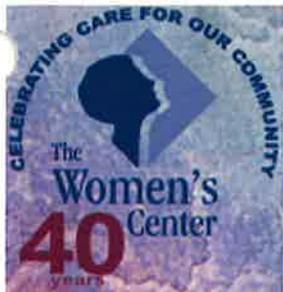
...those facing divorce or the loss of a partner get the emotional, legal, and financial counseling needed to get their lives back on track and reclaim their future.

...a woman who has lived through domestic violence or sexual assault finds the essential counseling and support services she needs to feel safe once again and begin the work of healing.

... preteens and teens experiencing new difficulties such as bullying, dating or peer pressures, or academic challenges find constructive ways to manage stress, build self-esteem and stay focused on their futures.

# The Women's Center Services





## Washington Post Interview with Domestic Violence Action The Women's Center

BY CAITLIN GIBSON May 17

The woman was so agitated that she wouldn't sit down right away, not until she'd scoured the perimeter of the office and examined the doorway, tracing the frame with her fingers, looking for any sign of an embedded surveillance device.

Ayaan Ali, a domestic violence victims' advocate for the Women's Center in Fairfax County, thought at first that the client was mentally ill. When the woman calmed down enough to sit and talk, she asked Ali not to write anything down, not to record anything. The client was terrified that her husband would find out where she was and what she was saying. He had ways of doing that, she told Ali: He was a high-ranking member of the intelligence community who had abused her psychologically and physically and threatened to have her killed.

Across the Washington region — home to an estimated 1 million federal workers, military personnel, intelligence operatives and government contractors with security clearances — social service agencies have become accustomed to domestic abuse cases with security-credential connections.

Victims' advocates and law enforcement officers say they often cope with traumatized clients who are particularly intimidated and paranoid — victims who dismantle their cellphones to avoid being tracked, who are afraid that their e-mail accounts and computers have been hacked, who think that the symbolic power and credibility of a security clearance means that friends, families and authorities will not believe allegations of abuse.

Although no one tracks the number of domestic violence cases that involve security clearances, the issue has come up so frequently for Kacey Kirkland, a victims' services specialist with Fairfax police, that she has gone out of her way to educate herself about the topic.

"I've taken it upon myself to seek out information from experts in this area," Kirkland said, "so when I talk to a victim who has probably gotten all of her information from an abuser, I know what to say."

Ayaan Ali had never handled a case involving a security clearance until she moved to Fairfax three years ago from Minnesota, where she had spent most of her decade-long career in advocating for domestic violence victims.

"Right away, I noticed that I had victims with abusers who worked for the Department of Defense, for intelligence agencies, who were high-ranking in the military, all of whom had security clearances," she said. "I had to learn new ways of safety planning for them."

When the woman who examined the door frame talked about her husband's work, "it was James Bond kind of stuff," Ali said. "Things I'd never heard except in movies. But after talking more with her, I understood why she felt how she did. She was smart. She understood what he had access to and what he was capable of."

With help, the woman was able to leave the marriage safely, Ali said.

[http://m.washingtonpost.com/local/for-domestic-violence-victims-abusers-security-clearances-add-an-extra-layer-of-fear/2014/05/17/b281e63a-ca64-11e3-93eb-6c0037dde2ad\\_story.html?wpmk=MK0000200](http://m.washingtonpost.com/local/for-domestic-violence-victims-abusers-security-clearances-add-an-extra-layer-of-fear/2014/05/17/b281e63a-ca64-11e3-93eb-6c0037dde2ad_story.html?wpmk=MK0000200)



## **Outcomes are only part of the Story**

**Shirley M. Clark**  
**Executive Director and CEO**  
**The Women's Center**

As any nonprofit Executive Director will tell you, it is essential to focus on the metrics and outcomes of the work we do. There is good reason for the attention, as donors and funders need to know that they are prudently allocating funds to organizations that can effectively leverage them serving the organization's mission. Last week, however, I experienced repeated reminders that it is important to tell the rest of the story – the heart of the story. The story that underscores the importance of the work we do.

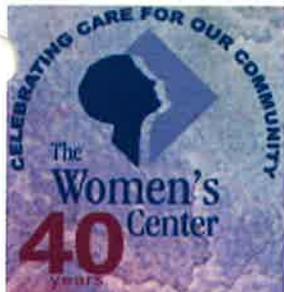
October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and as The Women's Center provides advocacy and counseling services to hundreds of victims and survivors each year, we were meeting to talk about those numbers and the measures that would go into one of our reports when my phone rang. The caller was a survivor and former Center client that had shared her horrific story with me several months ago. Having recently reached out to her with no response, I thought she may not have received my message. What she said told a different story. Even though it had been 15 years since she last had contact with her abuser, she said she needed a "strong" day to call me back – that because she had shared her story with me, she felt it might come up and she needed to be ready to talk about it and on most days she didn't feel brave. In that moment, the "how many we serve" dissipated as I felt her fear and also her will to be strong. Two hours later, while handing out wristbands to increase awareness of domestic violence, one woman looked at me and said, "I can't wear one – that hits too close to home and I am not ready to talk about it." Again, my heart heard the story that couldn't be told.

The headlines of late share snippets of a world one in four women know something about. What the headlines don't tell is how a victim's biology forever changes when being physically assaulted, controlled, abused; that even though the bones will heal and the outward bruises will fade, the unseen scars can last a lifetime.

At a recent lecture, a noted Psychiatrist at NIH presented a great visual. "Imagine a slinky," he said, "that someone put a kink in". "It won't smoothly go down the stairs like it used to, but if you hammer out the kink, it will work again. However you will always be able to see where it had been bent." Traumatic experiences are like the kink, and trusted counseling is like the hammer. The work takes time; healing will occur; functioning will come back.

As we dig deeper into the stories, there is so much more to learn about domestic violence. Children witnessing – and learning – patterns of abuse.

I am humbled to serve at The Women's Center, where many seek counseling to help manage the trauma and emotions resulting from abuse – some from deep-seeded childhood experiences and others as they attempt to change the current patterns of their lives. I am grateful for our compassionate therapists who help to make a difference in the lives of so many. However, we must expand our work to prevent these unacceptable behaviors and break the cycle of abuse. Our work must start early in a potential perpetrator's life and also in a potential victim's life. There is more to the story...



## Romy's Story

### The Women's Center

When Romy came to talk to me, she had been in therapy for several months at The Women's Center, we spoke for over an hour, as she relayed her story of neglect, abuse and doing the "wrong thing" as a child.

After moving to the States, when finding herself in trouble, a police officer suggested that she was "a good person that needed help" and recommended her to The Women's Center, where she called our Spanish line and met with The Women's Center's therapist, Vittoria.

Romy's daughter helped her to write a shortened version of her story....

Throughout my childhood my mother suffered from a really bad drug addiction. There were periods when my mom would go missing for weeks at a time. There were days where I didn't have any food or money. At times, I couldn't go to school, since I didn't have money to get on the public bus.

When my mom would go missing, I would get really scared, anxious, it caused a lot of insecurity and instability in my life. I started lying a lot to cover up for her. Yet, somehow, when my mother would finally return home, I would act as though nothing happened, like she had never left....She's my mother...

Due to her addiction, she would steal a lot and she would have me help her. I would be her look out to make sure no one saw her. The lies continued, I always felt so guilty. What really hurt the most is that she would steal from friends, people that were good to us.

About two years ago I went into a really bad depression. I started drinking a lot, eating a lot, I really let myself go. I was either drinking or eating or sleeping. I lost all my energy. I suffered from a lot of anxiety. I had this horrible impulse to go steal when I wasn't eating, drinking, or sleeping. In a way I wanted to get caught. I wanted to finally pay for what I did when I was younger. Luckily I did get caught and yes, I say lucky! The officer who caught me was like an angel sent from above. He asked me many questions and I answered them honestly. That's when he told me that because he is a police officer and has seen many situations, he knows when people that steal to steal and when people that steal because there something wrong. He told me that he knew I needed help and suggested I call the women center.

It was literally the best thing I've ever done in my life. Talking to my therapist really helped me put things together from my past and my present. Talking it out really helped me get to know myself. I finally understood my depressions and anxiety. Finally stop drinking, started eating better, and the anxiety to steal stopped, it is completely blocked out now. I am no longer hurting myself. I now have energy, feel free, strong. I've even gone back to doing arts and crafts and projects around the house.

I owe it all the Women Center. The best \$40 investment I've ever made in my life. I have finally found myself. Every time I finish a therapy session I leave so relieved and happy. I no longer feel anxiety I am no longer sad. Thank you Women Center for changing my life!



## A Graduate Student's Perspective of The Women's Center

It was a hot, late summer day when I walked into The Women's Center for my first day in the graduate student training program. As with anything new, my anxiety was elevated and my ego a bit fragile. It was hard to discern if the sweat on the back of my neck was due to the summer heat or my nerves.

After meandering through the maze of buildings and steps, I found my way into what would soon become one of my favorite places: the clinician group room. I was greeted with smiles, hellos, and an overwhelming sense of support. I was showered with stories of other experiences in the program and offered sage advice and input. An experienced clinician took the time to tell me about her first day, a decade earlier. And several others were patient in answering my long list of questions. I felt supported and part of something bigger than myself. And I carried that feeling with me into my client sessions.

I share that short story because in my opinion, a client's ability to feel safe and supported in sharing his/her deepest feelings with another person is at the heart of a good therapeutic relationship. It's not surprising then, that feeling safe and supported in sharing your experiences as a clinician is at the heart of a strong clinical training program.

As humans, we are wired to connect with and share our experiences with others. When we do, a transformation occurs within us, and we gain new insight and clarity about ourselves. I see it every day when I meet with clients. Their hard work and insight provide a new level of clarity and understanding about their lives and relationships, a milestone that is hard to achieve without feeling heard and validated by another.

What really surprised me, though, was how much my work at The Women's Center has transformed me. I entered the graduate training program with strong clinical knowledge and an overpowering desire to help others. As I wrap up my training, I realize I'm leaving the program with so much more: a tangible understanding of how powerful therapy can be, a strong support network of clinicians all striving every day to expand their expertise and improve the lives of others, and a deeper understanding of the importance of community, not only for supporting clients, but also for supporting clinicians.

I think back on that hot summer day with fondness. I still feel a little sweat on the back of my neck when I embark on a new relationship with a client. But now it's the healthy kind of anxiety: one mixed with hope and anticipation of the transformation to come.



## A Strategic Look Ahead for The Women's Center

Together with our partners, we evaluate how best to serve the mental health and well-being of the community. The unique talents of The Women's Center brings a responsibility to continually increase efforts to reach those in need and provide the mental health services that will enable that individual to live a more productive life.

Our mission-aligned goal is to improve the well-being of over 5,000 people a year. Along with ensuring all populations have financial access to **affordable mental health care**, our vision includes improving **physical access** to mental health care; **breaking the cycle of domestic violence** and **improving teen mental well-being and reducing suicidal ideation**.

These goals cannot be done by The Women's Center alone. Following are areas of impact; we ask for your help in funding and sustaining these efforts.

### ***Subsidized Mental Health Care***

Over 60% of our clients pay under \$50 per session and some pay as little as \$1

The Women's Center's needs on-going support to serve this underserved population.

### ***Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence***

Working closely with Fairfax County and D.C.'s Office for Victim's Services, we have witnessed repeat victims and have counseled child-witnesses to abuse. Breaking the cycle is a program that The Center must fully develop for victims and expand so that children are given the support they need to participate – and not act out – in class; to understand their trauma; and to begin to heal so that they don't become victims or perpetrators.

### ***Expanding Community Education and Outreach***

Suicide ideation, sexual abuse, domestic violence, joblessness, stress, grief and many more real issues impact thousands in our community each day. Many do not know that there are resources available to help them. Our objective is to be able to fund a therapist and/or other staff to speak regularly at events and meetings throughout the area to educate and to create events that meet specific community needs.

### ***Physical Access to Mental Health Care***

1) The Vienna offices are not ADA compliant. The Center pays to lease additional offices that have better accessibility and needs to consider a move in the future, which will need significant planning and financial support.

2) We see a trend, as we work with our community nonprofit partners, for a need to have counselors on site at their locations. These nonprofits are dealing with many concerns and their clients could benefit from the help, but often do not have the finances.

### ***Expanding and Deepening Partnerships***

Safety net provided by government and nonprofits is key to ensuring victims, clients, teens, children, homeless, aging are aware of and know how to access available services. This is a difficult maze for anyone, and especially if one is dealing with mental health cares.

The Women's Center's Information and Referral line will take of 9,000 calls a year; resources are needed to make and keep community connections with other service providers and to expand partnerships that enable more comprehensive service offerings.