

THE NEED:

Approximately 12,000 women give birth in the Richmond area each year. Some of their challenges include:

- ▶ **Anxiety, depression, and stress (including racism) during pregnancy**, which increases the risk of poor outcomes for mothers and their babies; 20 percent will experience a perinatal mood disorder.
- ▶ **Greater risks, including gestational diabetes and preterm birth** for women who are overweight or obese.
- ▶ **High rates of Cesarean section (33 percent)**, significantly affecting mothers' recovery, ability to care for their newborns and risk of post-traumatic stress.
- ▶ **Only 54 percent of Virginia mothers** are still breastfeeding at six months; in Richmond, only 14 percent of African-American first-time mothers who receive WIC were breastfeeding at six months, according to a recent survey. Six months is the medically recommended milestone for exclusive breastfeeding.

Promoting the health of pregnant mothers and new families provides a two-for-one return: healthy, emotionally resilient, engaged mothers tend to have healthier babies, giving the next generation a leg up on health and lowering the economic and human costs associated with poor outcomes. Yet access to information, resources, and support is fragmented for childbearing women and families. There is no dedicated facility to help them navigate the life-changing transition of pregnancy, birth, and early parenting.

THE SOLUTION:

Nurture's mission: to improve the health and wellbeing of childbearing families through fitness, education, social support, and community engagement. **Our goal:** to establish Richmond's first nonprofit resource center for childbearing families and the professionals who serve this audience, built on our mission's four pillars:

Move

Fitness & Yoga Classes for Pregnancy & Postpartum



Learn

Education for Expecting & New Parents



Connect

Social Support & Access to Resources



Inspire

Community Engagement & Professional Development



"Even in the best of situations, where babies are healthy and moms are healthy, there are still so many obstacles that one has to overcome. Having a . . . go-to place with information, consultative services and mentorship is so important for developing and growing healthy families." ~ Christine Isaacs, MD: Director, General Obstetrics and Gynecology Division, VCU Medical Center

Our innovative approach will create a structure for connecting existing assets within the community and providing services that cross class and racial lines. Sliding scales and outreach initiatives will encourage engagement by childbearing families from diverse backgrounds. The center will also serve as a hub to facilitate communication and collaboration between existing maternal/child health organizations so that we create a continuous web of support for RVA's emerging families.



OUR HISTORY:

Nurture received its 501(c)(3) status in September 2013. Since then, with an annual budget of under \$20,000, we have leveraged strong community support to accomplish the following:

2013

- ▶ Provided technical and social media support for the [Big Latch-On](#)
- ▶ Launched the city's only [donation-based prenatal and postnatal yoga classes](#)
- ▶ Produced [Perinatal Loss: Facilitating Healing Through Compassionate Dialogue](#), a professional development program for healthcare and social service providers

2014

- ▶ Participated in the [Standards for Nonprofit Excellence](#) Early Adopter Cohort
- ▶ Provided technical and social media support for [RVA Latches On!](#)
- ▶ Produced [From Trauma to Triumph: Recognizing the Impact of Childbirth Trauma on Women and Care Providers](#), a professional development program for perinatal healthcare and social service workers

2015

- ▶ Major sponsor of [#RVA Breastfeeds](#), a collaborative campaign to raise community support for breastfeeding that generated 100,000 social media engagements and received wide media attention

In 2016 we will:

- ▶ Facilitate conversations with maternal health stakeholders to identify gaps and resources impacting RVA's childbearing families
- ▶ Collaborate with the VCU School of Nursing in a pilot study to evaluate prenatal yoga's effects on weight gain, stress resilience and maternal-child outcomes among low income minority women
- ▶ Explore the feasibility of establishing a community-based doula program to serve low-income African-American and Latina mothers

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

We are working to build the capacity and funding base necessary to establish a +/-2,500 square foot facility within the City of Richmond to house fitness, education and support programs for RVA's childbearing families and provide staffing for same. We estimate that \$200,000 is needed to begin.

Founder and Executive Director:

Leslie Lytle, MS, CMA, LCCE, E-RYT500, has worked with childbearing families since 1992 in capacities including massage therapist, doula, yoga instructor, childbirth educator and advocate. A Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator, she holds a master's degree in Sociology where her area of focus was the sociology of health and illness with coursework in public health. Leslie is a member of the [Emerging Nonprofit Leaders Program](#) Class of 2013 and holds a Certificate in Nonprofit Management through [Nonprofit Learning Point](#). In addition to serving as Nurture's executive director, she works part-time as the Breastfeeding Coordinator for the City of Richmond.

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