

In 1975, Margaret Bartley, Director, reported that The Villa's clientele were comprised of well-off professional women, grandmothers who may have been secret drinkers for years or young girls coming off the streets who all shared a common bond of addiction. Addiction knows no socio-economic boundaries.

Addiction is one way that women deal with trauma; it is a learned way of coping with life's problems. For many women trauma occurred in childhood or adolescence and has been left untreated, the result has left them self-medicating to cope with their pain.

We know that women enter treatment with an enormous range of experiences. Many are attempting to cope with significant emotional trauma, the effects of living in violent relationships, and are often suffering from low self-esteem, poor coping skills, and the loss of a sense of control that leaves them with few options. Women will feel a great deal of shame and guilt and focus on the relationships they have failed.

Given this understanding of women and addiction, we know that gender-specific treatment is necessary for women. With this in mind, the underlying trauma must be addressed or women are likely to relapse as the pain is not dealt with. When women are given time to grieve about their losses and then slowly move past them, it decreases the chance of relapse as they address these painful events in their lives. Women learn to define themselves in a new and healthy way.

Our gender-specific treatment program provides women with a safe environment to help women overcome their addictions and take back control of their lives.

In 1975, Villa Staff and Residents ate meals together and all the furniture, linens, hand-made quilts and household items were donated by volunteer groups.

It was important that The Villa felt more like a home rather than an institution, and something we have continued to make a priority throughout our history. Our facilities are warm and welcoming and provide Clients with a safe, supportive and non-judgmental environment, which has been shown to improve outcomes.

In this home-like setting, women learn to work on establishing better relationships with family and friends, participate in social activities that don't involve drugs or alcohol, and develop the tools to rebuild their lives as they work towards wellness and recovery.



**The Villa atmosphere was bright and welcoming**

A woman could be referred by AADAC, AA, hospitals, clergyman or social agencies, or simply walk in and admit herself. Treatment was free for all women as The Villa was fully funded by the government. Margaret Bartley, Director, and Board Chair Ellen Todd, were very proud of the accomplishments of The Villa in its few short years. They admired the courage of the women attending the program and were gratified that many went on to lead happy, productive lives, due to their positive experiences at The Villa, and their hard work to achieve their goals. The Alumnae often returned to help new Clients by showing them they were not alone, and that they too could lead an addiction-free life.

Today, our Alumnae continue this tradition by sharing their experience, strength, and hope with other women working to overcome their addiction. This shared experience provides a connection and allows them to give back, which is also extremely important for their own recovery.

***"We keep what we have only by giving it away."***