THE THRIVING INITIATIVE



2025–2026

Academic Year

Impact Report

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WHO WE ARE

“This program helped me see that therapy, and talking, and reliving hard experiences, aren’t the only (or even most effective) way to heal.”

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Photo: Former Santa Barbara Volunteer Team

Survivors of sexual assault, stalking, and domestic violence are asked to recount their trauma again and again as they seek support. In 2019, UC Santa Barbara student Lauren Roberts set out to change that. The Strauss Foundation funded her initial idea, and together with local clinicians she built a lasting, free, and confidential space where survivors could heal together without retelling the hardest moments of their lives.



Thriving celebrates 7 years running

Our core series, *Thriving, Not Just Surviving*, centers around healing. Everyone in the room understands how deeply trauma affects the brain and body. Those truths don’t always have to be spoken aloud to be true. Instead, survivors learn practical tools they use every day, from breathing, sleep techniques, and gentle movement to setting boundaries and feeling safe in their own bodies again.

This year we grew to three regions, expanding to San Francisco while continuing to grow in San Diego and in Santa Barbara, home of our flagship programs. We have served over 465 survivors and allies to date!

Thank you to every donor, volunteer, alum, partner, and student who made this possible by believing in us, the power of community, and trusting the healing process.

This is only the beginning. In the years to come, many more survivors will benefit from this work and find their way to thriving. We are thankful to be a trusted resource in the crucial moments of a survivor’s life, and although we hope to make their journey lighter, we never take this responsibility lightly.

Our Roots: *Santa Barbara*

Santa Barbara will always hold a special place at Thriving. We were lucky to begin here, in a community that has shown up for us from day one, with student volunteers who shaped this program while juggling classes, jobs, and everything else on their plates. We can never fully thank Santa Barbara for all it has given us.



Original artwork by Vanessa Fonseca, former Santa Barbara volunteer

That spirit has followed us across the state. Our small staff now spans three regions in California, and we're proud that 70% of our staff members are former Thriving Initiative volunteers, many of whom now bring this work to the communities they call home. Many more alumni stay connected, giving their time whenever they can.

Santa Barbara is also home to a remarkable network of local providers who opened our eyes to the many ways healing can happen. Several have been with us from our earliest days and have gone far beyond what we could have asked. Dr. Jean Stultz trained our staff in trauma-informed methods and leads a somatic boundary workshop in our seven-week *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* (*TNJS*) series (page 13). Kathi Moreta's visual journaling workshop now lives beyond our programs. Her new book brings this healing tool to survivors across the country (page 15). Those approaches are at the heart of what we offer: healing that never asks survivors to relive what happened, and the freedom to choose what feels right.

Our deep roots in Santa Barbara helped us refine our program model and grow north to San Francisco and south to San Diego. To our Santa Barbara supporters: your support has made a tremendous impact on survivors in our own community and proved a model that now brings that same level of care to students across California. Thank you for believing in us from the beginning.





2025–26 Santa Barbara Team: Shelby Sager, Maya Danovitch, Jasmin Montiel, Emily Burke, Miranda DeLand, Julian Sierra, Anthony Torres, Evie Goulart, Kyla Woods and (not pictured) Alyssa Hull

Thriving South to North

Last spring, our San Francisco State University chapter took root, led by former Santa Barbara Thriving volunteer Andrew Foley (more on page 11). Andrew graciously built out the *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* (TNJS) core healing program, recruiting new student volunteers, seeking out local providers, and connecting to the larger SFSU campus. We are thrilled to build upon the foundation this fall.

We couldn't have headed north this quickly without San Diego. The success of our SDSU chapter, launched just last year, proved the Thriving model could take root beyond Santa Barbara. Now in its second year, our Southern California team of volunteers and staff has grown a strong circle of allies: students, local clinicians, family, and friends. We're excited to keep serving this community and to grow our community programs, which welcome survivors of all identities and their allies.



Original artwork by Hedieh Fahami, former San Diego volunteer

What is especially unique about The Thriving Initiative is that all of our programming at each campus is planned, supported, and led by passionate former Thriving volunteers. This is a true testament to the community that has been built by students, for students. Each academic year has a new, fresh feel, and each campus has its own distinctive personality. With students leading from the start, guided by professional providers who understand a survivor's journey, our participants get an experience unlike any other.

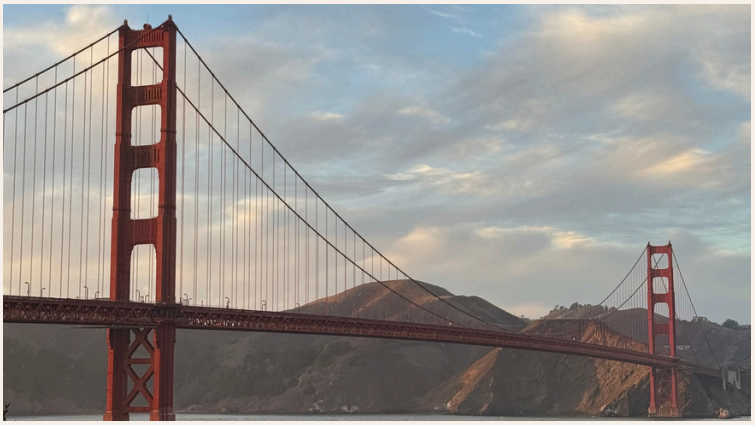
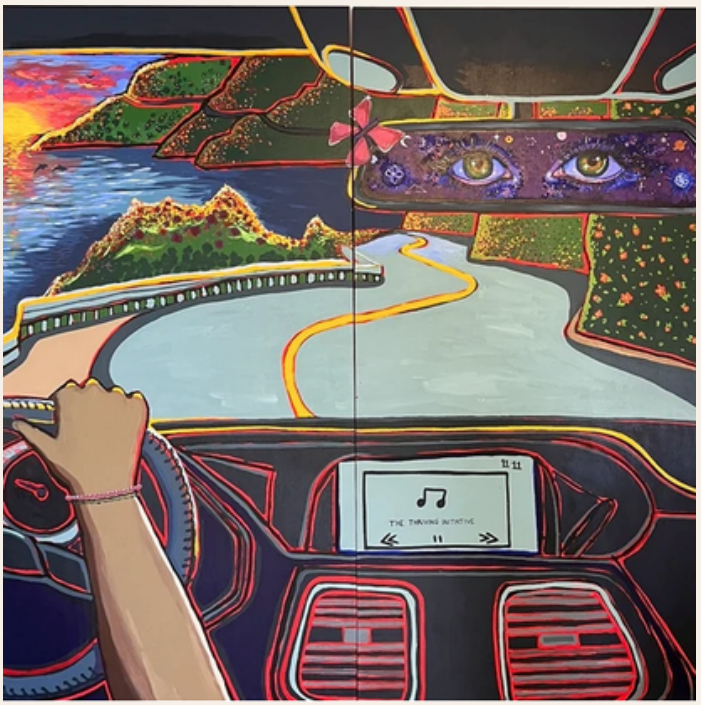


Photo by Executive Director, Lauren Roberts



Community Mural created by Thriving volunteers. Located at the Isla Vista Community Center, Goleta, CA



Photo: San Diego volunteer team workshop

A LETTER TO OUR SUPPORTERS

To our donors,

I'm Andrew Foley, a Program Manager at The Thriving Initiative, and I want to share what your support made possible at San Francisco State University this year.

I first worked with Thriving as a student volunteer at UCSB. Nothing like it existed at SFSU when I arrived, and students wanted better options, so I asked Lauren about expanding to Northern California and promised to help. Your support is what made it real.

Instead of asking students to talk through what happened to them, the program gives them ways to heal that don't require reliving it. Six participants joined our flagship seven-week series in the first week, the largest starting group we've seen for a new program, and seven student volunteers marketed and ran it. We also hosted a music healing event with the Music Student Alliance that drew 15 students. In all, Thriving reached 28 students directly this semester.

Students tried art therapy, bilateral movement, Reiki and guided meditation, dance and movement therapy, trauma-informed yoga, Tai Chi, and a wellness session led by a naturopathic doctor. Workshops averaged three or four people, which made the space feel safe and personal.

One of our most consistent participants stayed after a workshop to tell us how grateful they were that the program existed. It meant a lot, they said, to find a space where healing didn't require revisiting the hardest things they'd been through.

Students who arrived as strangers started leaving together. It mattered for our volunteers too; most are heading toward careers in social work, mental health, and healthcare, and for many this was their first exposure to survivor-centered support. I was a volunteer once myself, so I know what that can do.

Reserving campus space was hard for a new group, but Associated Students stepped in, and our Music Student Alliance partnership should ease that going forward. Outreach worked best face-to-face.

Next year we hope to add a second undergraduate group or launch one for graduate students, bring back trauma-informed yoga, and grow our network of licensed mental health professionals.

Thank you for believing in this. You helped start something at SFSU, and we're grateful for the chance to keep building it.

With gratitude,

Andrew Foley

Program Manager

OUR GROWTH

"It meant a lot to find a space where healing didn't require going back over the hardest things [I'd] been through."

— SAN FRANCISCO PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

This year marked our biggest season of growth yet: we've expanded to Northern California! Building on our growth from Santa Barbara to San Diego, we launched *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* at San Francisco State University last spring. It became one of our most successful launches yet, reaching 28 students in its first semester.

Since our founding in 2019, we've had the honor of walking alongside hundreds of survivors, meeting each one as an individual. Healing has no timeline, and whether someone is two weeks or two decades into their journey, they belong here. Behind every program are people who know it from the inside. Over the years, 74 student volunteers, including the team pictured here, have served with us through graduation, and many have stayed on as staff, now guiding the volunteers who follow in their footsteps.



San Francisco team, left to right: Andrew Foley, Lauren Roberts, Christina Gonzalez, Sierra Skinner

465

Program participants to date, including volunteers and community events

2019

Santa Barbara

Where it all began, with our first program at UC Santa Barbara (page 10).

2025

San Diego

Our first expansion, with a new chapter at San Diego State (page 9).

2026

San Francisco

Our first program in Northern California, at San Francisco State (page 12).

Where to next?

A look at where we hope to grow from here.

SEE LOOKING AHEAD, PAGE 17 →



OUR CORE HEALING SERIES · **ONE** MODEL, **THREE** CAMPUS **PROGRAMS**

Thriving, *Not Just Surviving*

Photo: UCSB graduating volunteers

Our free, seven-week healing series for college student survivors. Each week, a small group meets with a different local clinician or instructor, and no one is asked to share their story. Trained, trauma-informed student co-facilitators stay with the same group for all seven weeks, building community along the way. Read more about our workshops and the providers who lead them on page 13.

INSIDE A FEW OF THIS YEAR'S WORKSHOPS

Writing & Art
Expression through journaling, poetry, clay, painting, and more.

Sound Bath
Rest and grounding through sound, led by a certified professional.

Dance & Movement
Embodied movement, including yoga, always at each person's own pace.

Psychoeducation
Simple, practical tools for calming the nervous system on the go.

OUR PROGRAMS' MEASURED IMPACT

Across our regions, we've collected over 300 voluntary pre/post surveys designed with clinicians and independently reviewed to understand what changes for the survivors in our programs.

After our TNJS program, survivors report:

**All cohorts to date.*

- **50%** increase in sense of safety compared to before
- **49%** increase in use of healthy coping strategies
- **43%** increase in sense of community with other survivors
- **29%** decrease in feelings of isolation

"This workshop helped me to just feel like a person with other people, not just a survivor of something terrible."

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



Photo: San Diego Community Program

Why We're *Different*

Despite sexual violence being the most prevalent crime affecting college students, fewer than 1 in 5 student survivors use current victim services (Association of American Universities). Thriving offers something different: unlike traditional support groups, we build community among survivors without ever asking anyone to share or relive past trauma. The tools they gain last beyond our seven-week *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* series, with continued connections to our clinicians, our organization, and local resources.

In the words of our student volunteers, here is what makes Thriving different.

Independent & confidential.
No university affiliation, no Title IX reports, nothing shared with schools.

No retelling required.
No one recounts their trauma. Being in the room is enough.

Always evolving.
Our programs adapt to student needs, which can shift with campus life and current events.

Always free.
No fees of any kind, and every material is provided.

Growing future advocates.
Many volunteers carry trauma-informed care into careers in nursing, therapy, and medicine.

Choices, honored.
Every activity is optional, even sharing their real name.

REACHING ALL SURVIVORS

We have been successful at serving hard-to-reach populations. We lower barriers to entry so all survivors can receive the quality care they deserve, for as long as they need it, always free.

**All cohorts to date.*

86% live with one or more disabilities (mental, emotional, and/or physical)

66% identify as LGBTQIA+

42% report a household income under $20,000

"I feel that I have learned how to accept some parts of myself with ease, love those parts, and make friends/ community with others who have experienced similar things."

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



San Diego volunteers, left to right: Dorothy Nguyen, Savanna Clyne, Amy Spackman, Camber Hayes

Thriving, Not Just Surviving in

SAN DIEGO

"I feel like I've gained more coping strategies to put in my toolbox for the harder days."

— SAN DIEGO PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Our San Diego chapter continues to grow and thrive as we head into the new academic year. Over the 2025–26 school year, The Thriving Initiative has created new and nourishing relationships on campus and has continued to build out our team!

Over the course of the year, our San Diego State University (SDSU) chapter successfully completed two series of *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* programs, offering innovative, healing workshops led by local providers. Along with our core healing program, there were plenty of opportunities to connect to the wider campus community through collaborative community events, including a yoga event co-hosted by SDSU Panhellenic and a cooking class through SDSU's Calli Kitchen to teach students the importance of healthy meals.



"I really loved...just talking with my small group before the actual provider was invited in was always so fun and made me feel really comfortable."

— SAN DIEGO PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

San Diego volunteer team '26 grads, left to right: Amy Spackman, Emi Chrash, Riley Saunderson, Camber Hayes, Savanna Clyne

We could not have done this without our incredible team and supporters. The SDSU team included:

10 San Diego-based community providers partnered with us to establish and maintain TNJS at SDSU.

10 SDSU student volunteers focused on connecting the wider campus to our programs and events.

2 Thriving Initiative staff dedicated directly to San Diego programs.

Thriving, Not Just Surviving in

SANTA BARBARA

"I didn't feel any discomfort with showing up... it felt like the only safe space I've found in UCSB."

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Our core program, Thriving, Not Just Surviving, ran for all three quarters at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) during the 2025–26 academic year. Across three seven-week workshop series, our UCSB community engaged in a variety of workshops led by returning providers and new ones alike. This year, Shelby Sager, who served as a volunteer program co-facilitator the year before, stepped in as the chapter's program manager, using her experience as a volunteer to improve our program from the inside out.

This year also brought many full-circle moments: UCSB alumni who once sat in these workshops as participants have gone on to become leaders in the Thriving space. This sentiment extends beyond Santa Barbara: UCSB training and mentorship served as the foundation for both new chapters this year, as volunteers who got their start here carried the model to new places. With Santa Barbara as Thriving's longest-running program, we're just as excited to continue exploring how we can deepen our connection with the UCSB community, strengthen our partnerships with local providers who make this work possible, and welcome in future student volunteers.



"Having people that cared to follow up with me about what I talked about last week really helped me understand that I am valuable enough to have people remember me."

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Santa Barbara volunteer team '26 grads, left to right: Emily Burke, Miranda DeLand, Anthony Torres, Jasmin Montiel

Our ability to continue our longest-running program ever is only possible thanks to our incredibly talented team:

7 Santa Barbara-based community providers partnered with us this year to maintain TNJS at UCSB.

11 UCSB student volunteers focused on connecting the wider campus to our programs and events.

2 Thriving Initiative staff dedicated directly to Santa Barbara programs.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

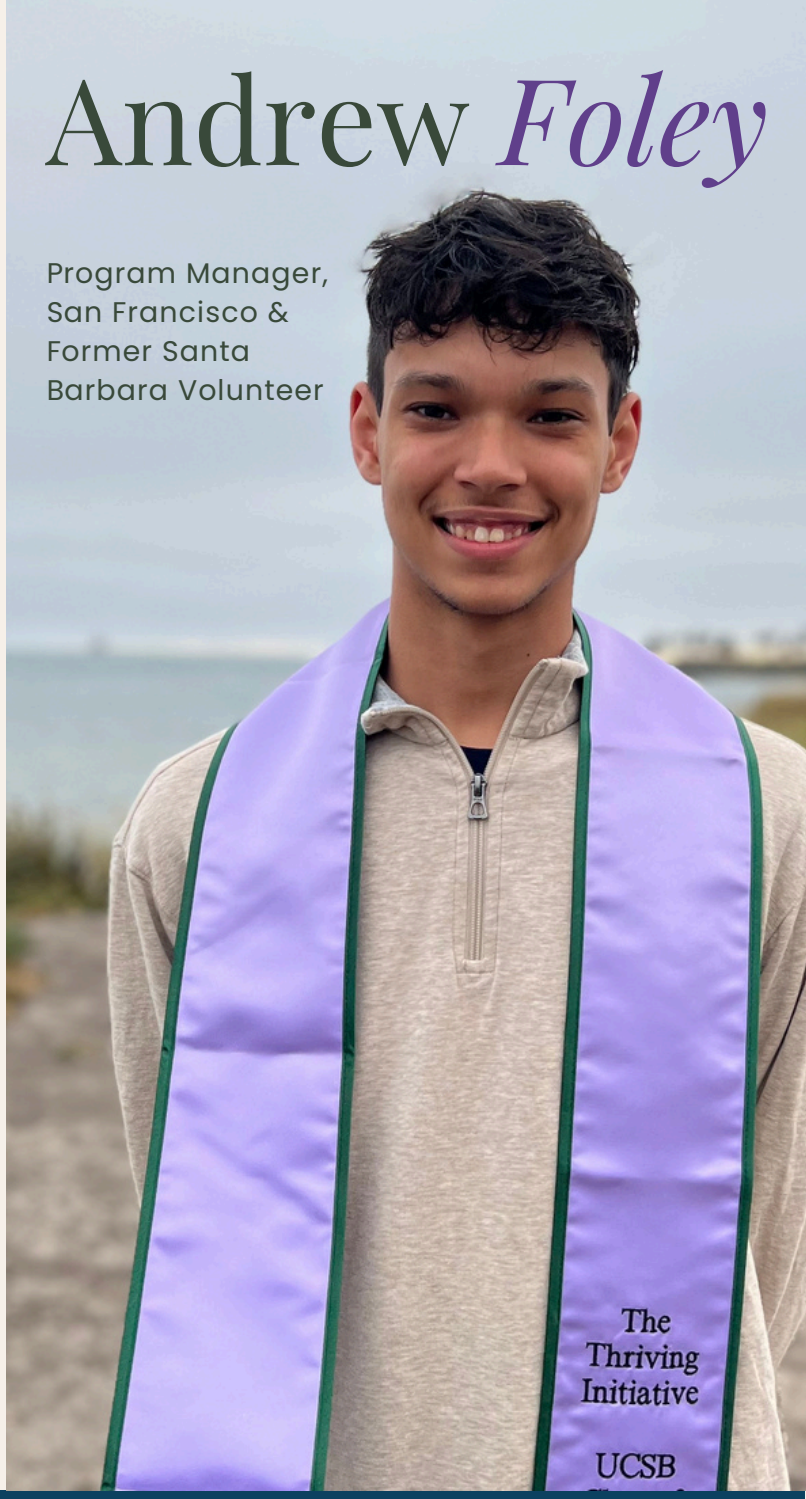
Andrew started with The Thriving Initiative as a student volunteer at UC Santa Barbara from 2021 to 2023 while he completed his undergraduate studies in Psychological & Brain Sciences. As he graduated and moved to San Francisco to continue his studies at San Francisco State University, he recognized the need for more support for student survivors on campus after having conversations with peers and researching university options for survivors.

As Andrew does so well, he took initiative and reached out to our Executive Director, Lauren Roberts, to see if The Thriving Initiative would consider expanding programs to Northern California. With the support of the Adrian Family Foundation and the fervent focus from Andrew, who naturally became SFSU's first Program Manager, we were able to provide our core healing program, *Thriving, Not Just Surviving*, at San Francisco State University during the spring 2026 semester. Alongside the core healing series, Andrew recruited a student volunteer team, made up of seven students with roles ranging from marketing and outreach to student co-facilitation, to build a foundation on campus.

Andrew continues to build our San Francisco chapter as we head into the fall 2026 semester by reaching out to prospective providers, connecting with returning and prospective volunteers, and building out the curriculum for the *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* series.

Andrew *Foley*

Program Manager, San Francisco & Former Santa Barbara Volunteer



FROM THE FIRST SEMESTER IN THE BAY

"Laying the foundation at SFSU has really meant building something from the ground up. When we started, there wasn't already a roadmap for what our program would look like on this campus, so a lot of this first year has been about building relationships, learning what our students respond to, and creating a presence that people can begin to trust. It's been rewarding to watch those first pieces come together and know that each partnership, volunteer, provider, donor, and student who participates is helping us create something that can continue to grow."

— ANDREW FOLEY, SAN FRANCISCO PROGRAM MANAGER

Thriving, Not Just Surviving in

SAN FRANCISCO

"Untraditional survivor services matter. I had never found anything like it, and it was what I needed right then."

— SAN FRANCISCO PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Our first semester at San Francisco State University (SFSU) highlighted that every person connected to The Thriving Initiative moves with such intention, care, and passion. From our Program Manager, Andrew Foley, to all the volunteers who supported our seven-week series during the spring semester, as well as our supporters, we could not be more thankful. We especially want to thank the Adrian Family Foundation; their belief in our mission allowed this program to get started in NorCal.

The spring 2026 semester was all hands on deck at SFSU, including seven volunteers to spread the word on campus and to co-facilitate every week of our *Thriving, Not Just Surviving* workshop series. We brought in incredible providers weekly, ranging from gentle yoga and breathwork to Reiki and Tai Chi.



"A moment that stuck out to me was during our dance therapy session. We did an exercise where we created a dance combo together, and it really brought everyone out of their shells!"

— SAN FRANCISCO STUDENT VOLUNTEER

San Francisco volunteer team '26 grads, left to right: Savannah Evans, Sierra Skinner, Deandra Lara

As we establish The Thriving Initiative at SFSU, we are excited to see what comes next! The spring 2026 semester showcased a compassionate, specialized, and dedicated team that came together to launch programs in just a few months:

7 San Francisco-based community providers partnered with us to kickstart TNJS at SFSU.

7 SFSU student volunteers focused on connecting the wider campus to our programs.

2 Thriving Initiative staff dedicated directly to San Francisco programs.

A WINDOW INTO OUR WORK

Provider *Spotlights*

"I feel like I have gained every single sense of coping strategies from this workshop. The providers made me drastically shift my perceptions of how I was doing for the better, and gave me tools to process things better."

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Photo: Santa Barbara Mock Workshop

Across all Thriving chapters, we are fortunate to work with so many wonderful providers, clinicians, and instructors in our community who pour their time, ideas, and expertise into our workshops. Our providers offer survivors impactful and unique healing modalities, and no two workshops ever look the same – we connect with providers across a wide breadth of disciplines and backgrounds. Our program participants explore art, yoga, Reiki, dance, sound healing, boundary work, and so much more. Here are three of them, one from each region, offering a glimpse of what a weekly TNJS workshop looks like:

SANTA BARBARA

Dr. Jean Stultz, LMFT



With Thriving since our very first year in 2019, Dr. Jean has helped shape our program from the ground up, bringing guidance, warmth, and deep compassion to survivors across generations of Thriving participants. As a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist specializing in somatic practices, embodiment, and boundary work, she brings over 30 years of experience to her unique workshops. From exploring physical boundaries with circles of yarn to embodiment conceptualization with clay, Dr. Jean's workshops ground survivors and invite them to explore how they feel in their bodies and in the room.

> *"I honestly LOVED the unique workshops... It was a wide range of providers, and I learned SO many ways to handle stressful periods, and feel like myself again."*
>
> — SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Provider *Spotlights*

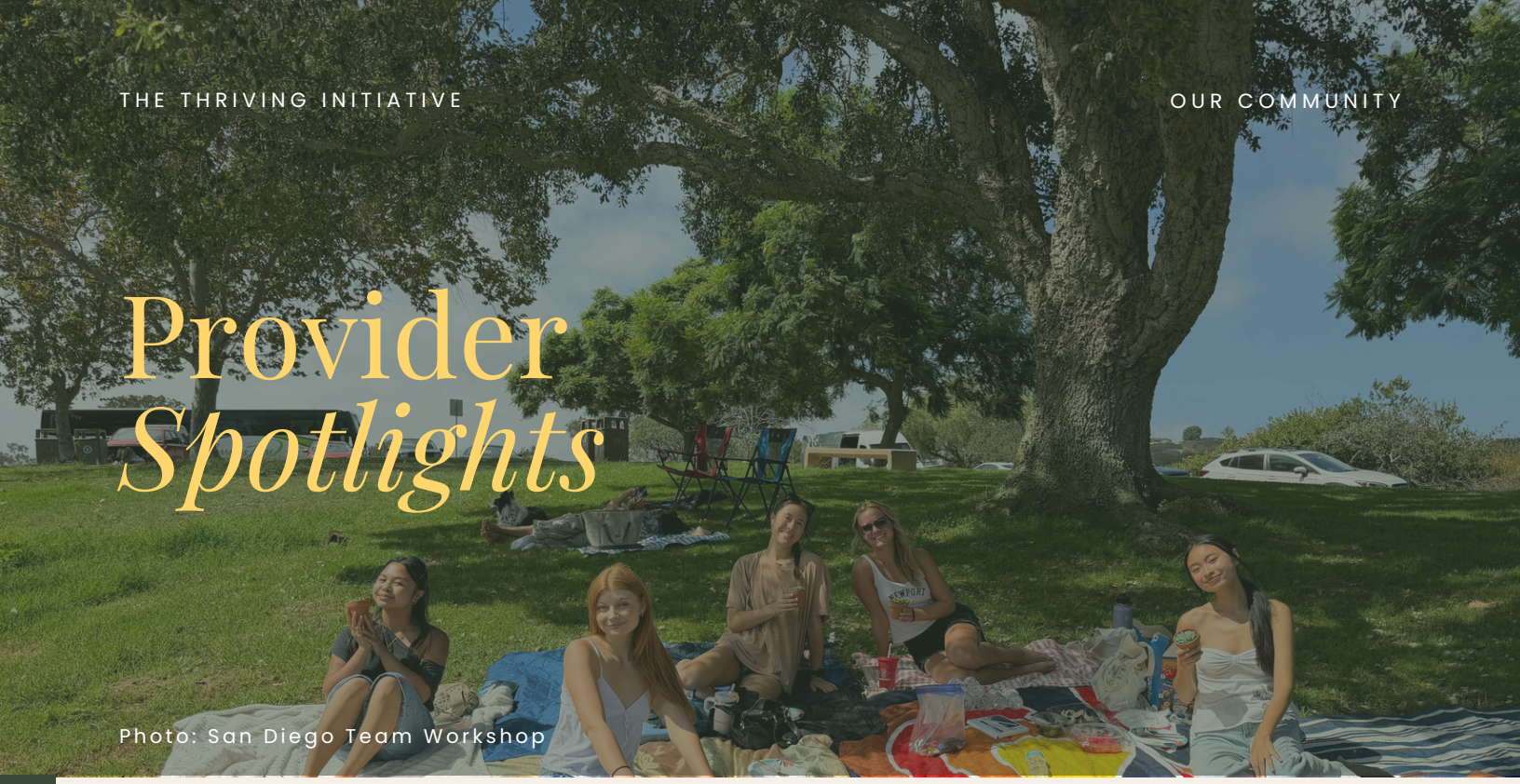
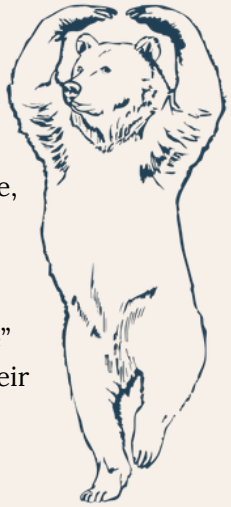


Photo: San Diego Team Workshop

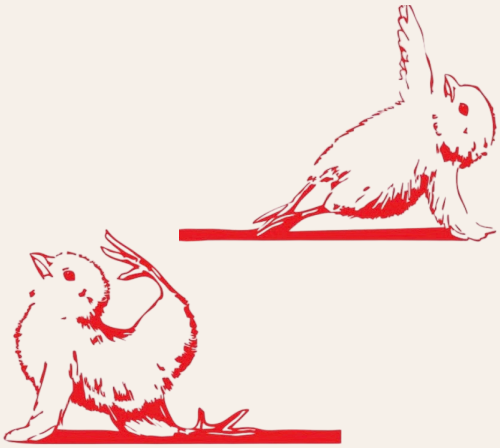
SAN DIEGO

Nhung Chau, AMFT

A first-generation Vietnamese Chinese American immigrant, Nhung creates an empathetic space for clients navigating identity, life transitions, and self-acceptance, with a special focus on supporting Asian American, immigrant, and neurodivergent community members in her practice. Through Thriving, Nhung led an interactive psychoeducation workshop, introducing survivors to the Zones of Regulation and Polyvagal Theory, using a low-pressure drawing activity to explore what each "zone" feels like. Survivors left Nhung's workshop with tangible, simple ways to regulate their nervous system on the go.



Original artwork by a San Diego student volunteer



Original artwork by a San Diego student volunteer as part of a "Self-Care" social media campaign

SAN FRANCISCO

Lisa Manca, MA, LPCC, BC-DMT

A San Francisco–based licensed professional clinical counselor and board-certified dance/movement therapist, Lisa Manca brings over a decade of experience working with the body as a pathway to healing that talk alone sometimes can't reach. Through Thriving, Lisa invites survivors to reconnect with their bodies at their own pace, using props like fabrics and scarves to explore movement from soft and floating to grounded and pulling. Survivors are even invited to express their current state as a movement, reminding them that the focus is never on how it looks, only on how it feels.

FEATURE

THRIVING ANYWHERE

Beyond the workshop with author *Kathi Moreta*

For years, Kathi's art and journaling workshop has been a cornerstone of Thriving at UCSB. Quarter after quarter, Kathi has brought participants a unique opportunity to mesh creativity with thoughtful self-reflection, inviting participants to create, answer journaling prompts, collage, and much more. This workshop has made lasting impacts on participants and staff alike – and now, Kathi has found a way to reach those who have never set foot in our spaces.

Kathi has written a self-guided companion book entitled *From Surviving to Thriving*, taking the same prompts and principles from her workshop and putting them together for anyone to explore. This act of generosity goes above and beyond: not only does it open Thriving up to just about anyone, but Kathi is donating all proceeds from the book right back into The Thriving Initiative, fueling future workshops and the next generation of Thriving participants.

Spring 2027 *Book Launch!*



Healing does not happen in just one space, and Kathi's book allows Thriving to happen anywhere, sharing the knowledge and impactful experience of being in a Thriving workshop outside of our workshop walls. We could not be more grateful for Kathi, for her impact in our spaces, and for the book that makes Thriving accessible to everyone. The book will be available in spring 2027!


Photo: Kathi Moreta

A PARTICIPANT'S EXPERIENCE

"I felt a HUGE moment of growth when we were in our first week of the visual journaling workshop because I was able to remove the expectations I had from myself and do my own thing when I felt like we were moving too fast. I felt encouraged by the space we had created in that it was emphasized that everything in our weeks together was optional. Having the freedom to say 'no'... was really powerful."

— SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Our *Philanthropists*

"Each partnership, volunteer, provider, donor, and student who participates is helping us create something that can continue to grow."

— ANDREW FOLEY, SAN FRANCISCO PROGRAM MANAGER



Photo by student volunteer Camber Hayes, San Diego

Thank you.

Your generosity makes our work possible. Every gift this year has helped us create and maintain a holistic space where survivors can receive trauma-informed care and support *for free, for as long as they need*, without having to relive or discuss their past. Thank you for growing with us across California so we can offer our programs to more survivors.

VISIONARIES $50,000+

Zora and Les Charles

PILLARS $20,000–$49,999

Adrian Family Foundation
Anonymous

CHAMPIONS $10,000–$19,999

Qualcomm
Towbes Foundation
Anonymous

ADVOCATES $1,000–$9,999

Ally Du
Denise and Ralph Wagner
Eva Casey-Velasquez
Harrold Family Foundation
Henry W. Bull Foundation
Jackie and JT Mates-Muchin
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
Sears Family Trust
Anonymous

ALLIES $100–$999

Agilent
Bob Szatkowski
Cameron Ohlson
Carolyn and Art Merovick
Google
Holly Yang
Kate Mitchell
Matthew Cantwell
National Philanthropic Trust
Raven Anker
Shivani Awasthi
Anonymous

FRIENDS $1–$99

Aanchal Mehndiratta
Alicia Grinnals
Chase Philpot
Elle Jones
Emma Duge
Fanny Huang
Mathilde Papillon
Sally and Tom Reeder
Anonymous

LOOKING AHEAD

Three schools in, so much more to go.



Photo: Program Managers (and past UCSB volunteers) Lauren McKenzie & Shelby Sager

Help us reach the next campus.

Thriving, Not Just Surviving is ready to grow. With additional support, we can bring free, trauma-informed healing workshops to more student survivors across California, especially now, when support matters more than ever.

> *"Knowing that it was a safe space that had food, fidget toys, resources, & the kindness of letting me be present imperfectly kept me coming back."*
>
> — SANTA BARBARA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



WHAT YOUR GIFT CAN DO TODAY

$50 gives a survivor a personalized self-care kit

$250 provides yoga mats for a healing series

$500 sponsors a survivor's program costs

$1,000+ champions community healing programs

Donate online: thethrivinginitiative.org/donate

To discuss the impact of your gift, contact Executive Director, Lauren Roberts, at lroberts@thethrivinginitiative.org.

Not able to give right now? Volunteer, share this report, or follow @thrivinginitiative.

THE THRIVING INITIATIVE

Healing has no guidebooks, but we've been lucky enough to find great guides.
Thank you for ensuring the next generation won't have to go through it alone.
Thank you for being part of our community.

For more information, to submit a testimonial,
to volunteer, or to donate, please visit our website:

thethrivinginitiative.org

Contact us

general@thethrivinginitiative.org

Follow us on social media: @thrivinginitiative

Donate online: thethrivinginitiative.org/donate

Or mail a check payable to "The Thriving Initiative"
to 7127 Hollister Ave, Suite 25A-207, Goleta, CA 93117

Tax ID: 85-0827076. Your donation is tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Thank you.





Executive Director Lauren Roberts, Tony Munoz, AMFT, Elle Jones, and Lauren McKenzie



Graduating UCSB 2026 Volunteers



Therapist & Program Operations Manager, Elle Jones

THE THRIVING INITIATIVE

EST. 2019



Thank you.

Sincerely,
Our Thriving Team