



Women of Silicon Valley/ WomenSV Background



Director and Founder of **WomenSV**, Ruth Patrick has a Master's in English Literature, Master's in Education, a teaching credential, all from the University of Toronto, as well as the California State Certification in Domestic Violence Advocacy.

Patrick worked as a teacher and curriculum writer for Stanford's Center for Research in Disease Prevention. She used interviews with psychiatrists, social workers, and physicians to create a curriculum designed to raise awareness about eating disorders in young women, then went into the Santa Clara County School District to implement it.

She discovered that some children presenting with symptoms of ADD/ADHD in the classroom were actually experiencing another root cause. Their ability to concentrate, follow instructions and carry out assignments had been compromised by the trauma and chaos they were dealing with at home. They were the hidden victims of domestic violence (DV). Patrick also had several friends and colleagues dealing with this issue.

When they sought help, they all reported a general lack of understanding, sympathy and resources due to their apparent wealth and privilege. She ultimately identified 4 gaps in DV services: a shortage of services in North County; an absence of DV services for women in middle-to-upper income areas; a lack of community awareness around DV in affluent areas; and a lack of DV training amongst providers serving women in this demographic.

Patrick set out to address all of these gaps, using the same social research model developed at Stanford, interviewing over 30 providers in the field of domestic violence. She pitched this program to the Los Altos Community Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit. In 2011, they awarded her a grant and made WomenSV a managed and sponsored program of LACF. After 3 years of incubation under their fiscal sponsorship, she was recruited by another non-profit, Family and Children's Services, to create a victims' services program.

She was then invited by 501 (c) 3 Domestic Violence Intervention Collaborative (DVIC) to partner with them and accepted, in order to maintain her focus on the demographic she created her program to serve: women in middle to upper income areas in relationships with powerful, influential, affluent abusers who made it very difficult for them to leave safely, keep custody of their children and maintain anything close to their previous standard of living. Currently, and with the help of her business advisors from SCORE, who have been advising her over the past 5 years, Patrick is now in the process of creating her own 501 (c) 3.

Patrick's focus continues to be education. Abuse is a learned behavior. Once it becomes an engrained behavior, it can be unlearned but only with great difficulty and profound motivation. When it involves domestic violence, research shows, and Patrick's experience with over 700 women confirms, that education—and the earlier, the better—is the best form of prevention and intervention.

The mission of WomenSV continues to be to raise awareness about domestic violence in the professional community, to empower victims of affluent abusers through education, advocacy and connection to resources, and to promote the right of every woman and child to live in peace, safety and freedom in their own home.