

WOMEN'S STRENGTH & RESILIENCE

By Diane Middlebrooks

March is Women's History month, and what I had planned to write does not now seem to fit with what we are all experiencing. The last few days I have been busy cancelling the Women's Initiative events we had planned for the next few months. I was especially looking forward to them, since this year we are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Women's Initiative. Our speakers are disappointed, as are all of you who already registered for some of those events. When things return to normal, we will reschedule them.

Over the years, the women we have featured during our Women's History month programs had this in common: strength, resilience, and courage. Last year, Women's Initiative members shared stories of their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, and how they coped with and survived trying and frightening times. It was inspiring. We all need some inspiration right now.

The last few days I compulsively read story after story about the coronavirus: what are the symptoms, what are the numbers diagnosed in Illinois, what is open and what is closed, etc. What broke my fear cycle was glancing at an old photo on my bookshelf of my grandparents and a young girl who was my mother, taken just after they arrived in this country. Then I thought about my other grandmother who also crossed the ocean to come to this country, and how frightened they must have been, but had the strength and resilience to get through it. Think about your own mothers and grandmothers, and other women who inspire you, and the courage, strength and resilience they had during the uncertain and frightening times of their lives.

I know many of you who have gone through difficult times and have marveled at your strength and resilience. So, this Women's History month we are celebrating all of you.

I look forward to seeing all of you in person soon. In the meantime, take care of yourself, and be kind to yourself. Following are some helpful recommendations from the CDC ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))

Manage Anxiety & Stress: Things you can do to support yourself

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.