

## **NURTURING WELLBEING**



## KATIE SCHMITT

## IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR KIDS

**DR. KATIE SCHMITT ADMITS** that she had no plans to work with children when she entered the field of psychiatry, but two years into her residency that all changed. She quickly discovered a passion for helping kids during one of the most intense moments of their lives and hopefully changing their path just slightly.

When she was appointed as the medical director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for Meriter Health in 2010, there were limited resources and access for patients of this inpatient psychiatric program dedicated to kids. Often families were sent to Milwaukee or farther for care because of the high demand for services in Dane County.

Through coordination with other departments, support from Meriter for more staff and beds, and an outreach program to schools, pediatricians and community programs regarding available options, Schmitt has increased the number of children and teens served at Meriter from 560 in 2010 to an expected 850 for 2016.

Schmitt was recently appointed as associate medical director of Behavioral Health for Meriter, a role that will allow her to address the entire age spectrum for inpatient psychiatric care, including participation with New Start, Meriter's addiction service.

Looking ahead, Schmitt knows her work is not done. The Child and Adolescent Psychiatry program still runs a wait list nine months of the year, and the most important thing she can do is get the community to react.

"I'm really passionate about telling our story through the Meriter Unity Point Health Foundation because it's a story people can relate to," she says. "So many of us are touched by mental illness."

Schmitt feels that if the public, including other health care providers and administrators, recognizes the need and benefits of patient services, people will donate, speak up—and demand the right care for area children and teens. She's ready to take on the challenge. -Emily Leas

## ILANA NANKIN BREATHING DEEP, MAKING CHANGE

**JUST SIX YEARS AGO**, as a pre-K teacher in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ilana Nankin was stressed and unsure that she had the tools to navigate the world of education. She discovered yoga and found a peace within herself, and shared that with her 4-year old students by introducing breathing exercises and mindfulness in the classroom.

Nankin came to UW Madison in 2012 to pursue her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction, following a cohort of first-year teachers as part of her dissertation work.

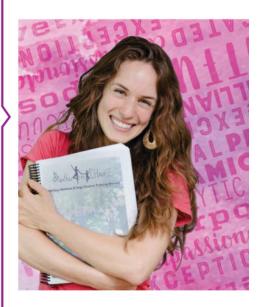
"I found very quickly that these first-year teachers who went in like social justice warriors, became so stressed, so overwhelmed—just like I had in my teaching—but did not have the tools or support to take care of themselves," Nankin explains.

As she continued her Ph.D. work, her ideas on starting change from within through yoga and self-care were only confirmed and in January 2015 she decided, "I'm starting a movement and nothing is stopping me."

Today, she is the founder and CEO of Breathe for Change, the world's only 200-hour wellness and yoga teacher training that's designed for educators.

"Our graduates get their yoga alliance certification, and a wellness champion certification through [Breathe for Change] which allows them to run programs in their school with our support," explains Nankin, noting that this unique approach empowers teachers to create change within their own communities.

In just two short years, the program grew from 34 certified educators in Madison to 200 in 2016 across Madison, the Bay Area and New York City. The goal is to graduate 600-700 students in 2017 by expanding outside of education to other professional fields and in more cities. For Nankin, it's all about fostering conditions that empower people to best do their own important work in the world. – *Emily Leas* 



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