

2016-2017

TIMELESS WISDOM. TIMELY ACTION.

GARRISON INSTITUTE :: BIENNIAL REPORT



The Garrison Institute’s tagline “Timeless Wisdom, Timely Action.” evokes both dimensions of our work, from eternal truths to current events. It’s about inwardness – tuning in and discovering what is unchanging and most fundamentally human through contemplative practice. It’s equally about outwardness – reaching out, deeply engaging with the world here and now, and applying what is skillful and effective to meet the needs of our time.

2016 and 2017 were quite a time. They were years of historic change and disruption, stress, and distress. But as many wisdom traditions teach, that’s impermanence; it’s endemic, always with us one way or another. Recognizing and working with that basic truth is the gateway to relieving suffering.

So it proved for us. As you’ll read in this biannual report, 2016 and 2017 also brought historic opportunities to pursue our mission of building a more compassionate and resilient future for all.

Our work has never been more relevant or more in demand. It speaks to a widely felt need to meet rising fears and crises with wisdom and compassion, groundedness and connectedness.

Starting at the end of 2016, we saw attendance at Garrison Institute retreats and events swell significantly. As division and polarization deepened in our culture, we focused on building community, compassion, resilience, and renewal, both in our own region and across the country. We got strategic about extending our reach to match the growing need, finding new venues and partners beyond our walls, and leveraging national and even global impacts.

For example, as conflicts, climate change and natural disasters intensified around the world, we tripled the number of trainings offered by our Contemplative-Based Resilience (CBR) Project, which helps humanitarian aid workers cope with the stress of serving those in need. As the refugee crisis engulfed the Middle East, we established CBR trainings in Amman, Jordan, enabling us to help aid workers deployed in Syria and throughout the region.

The following pages give a brief overview of what we did in this consequential time in history, how we did it, and how it helped further our mission. To say we’re proud of these achievements is true, but “grateful” would be nearer the mark. We’re thankful to be in a position to make a difference, and we appreciate how lucky we are to be part of a vital and growing community of like-minded people and organizations working with us towards a better future.

With gratitude,



Marc Weiss / Executive Director





TUNING IN

Headquartered in a former monastery on the banks of the Hudson River, which we reimagined and reshaped as “a monastery for the 21st century” – diverse, inclusive, welcoming, and relevant – each year, the Garrison Institute offers refuge, reflection, and restoration for thousands of people from all walks of life.

All our activities share a common thread of doing “inner work” and tuning into inner experience in order to animate our “outer work” and conceive new possibilities for the world around us.

We bring together teachers, students, practitioners, and innovators in the fields of contemplative practices, science, the arts, technology, social justice and environmental advocacy. Through a rich array of contemplative-based retreats and gatherings, together we explore diverse wisdom traditions and contemporary ideas, seeking to deepen spiritual practices, cultivate inner resources, build compassion and resilience, reframe our relationship with the natural world and with technology, and prepare us to work effectively for a more just, loving, and sustainable world.

We offer specially designed trainings for people working in such fields as social work, education, humanitarian aid, and the non-profit sector. We also host private meetings and retreats for businesses and institutions, working with them to design their retreat experience, and drawing on our network of renowned teachers, experts, innovators, and authors to speak and facilitate.

In 2016 and 2017, we offered a total of 240 diverse retreats, workshops, symposia, and gatherings at the Garrison Institute, in a wide variety of formats, exploring everything from affordable housing to Zen Buddhism. Nearly all entailed some component of contemplative or mindfulness practice.

Some addressed what we call “[Transformational and Contemplative Ecology](#),” growing and convening our network of climate, sustainability, spiritual and community leaders to re-conceive our relationship with the natural world and help make environmental advocacy more effective. For example, in 2016 Joanna Macy led a retreat on “Rainer Maria Rilke and the Force of the Storm.” Macy’s “Work that Reconnects” trainings have empowered environmental activists and scientists worldwide, drawing on Buddhist teachings, systems theory and the deep ecological visions of poets like Rilke, whom Macy and Anita Barrows translated, and who foresaw the disruptions of our time over a century ago. You can watch Macy introducing the retreat [here](#).

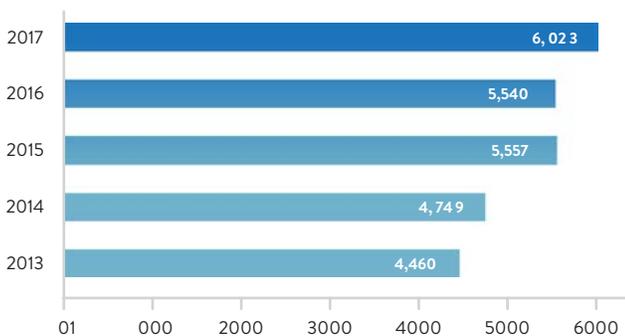


We also focused on “[Transformational Leadership](#),” forming partnerships with businesses and institutions that seek to help their leaders build a more mindful, compassionate, mission-driven organizational culture amid intense volatility and change. To that end, we hosted successful corporate retreats for organizations ranging from Kickstarter to the Global Impact Investing Network. In 2017, we reached out to businesses and organizations and invited them to collaborate on transformational leadership work. As a result, we will be working with more businesses in 2018, exploring best practices for bringing mindfulness and compassion to the workplace and strategies for nurturing the growth of the transformational leadership movement.

Some of our events and workshops explored the arts as ways of deepening our sense of connectedness and shared humanity, analogous in that sense to spirituality and contemplative practice. In 2016, the Sufi musical group Riyaz Qawwali gave a concert coupled with a talk by Pir Zia Inayat-Khan on music and sound as a devotional practice in the Sufi tradition. Eve Ensler’s play “Extraordinary Measures,” which deals with the dying process, was performed at the Institute as part of the 2016 Buddhist Contemplative Care Symposium. Meredith Monk led a 2017 workshop at the Institute on “Voice as Practice,” and gave a public concert and talk on art and spiritual practice.

Other Garrison Institute activities support what we call “[Movements of the Spirit](#),” identifying diverse communities of spiritual practice, building an

PARTICIPANTS BY YEAR



“Being able to deepen my practice has revolutionized my relationship to myself and others. It’s transformed my life, and I’m extremely grateful. Garrison has helped me connect my inner journey with my work with nonprofits that are making a real difference in people’s lives.”

RETREAT PARTICIPANT

interdisciplinary community around them and designing spiritually grounded, civil dialogues among them that can cut across political divides. Spiritual frameworks shape our sense of perspective, morality, meaning, and purpose, and are a deep part of our common bond. We believe that reaffirming them is key to overcoming polarization and divisiveness we’re now experiencing, and reweaving our frayed social fabric.

Our work has touched a nerve. As we told [The Wall Street Journal](#), the Institute experienced a significant uptick in attendance at the end of 2016 and into 2017. With retreats like Tara Brach and Jonathan Foust’s “Mindfulness and Compassion Practices that Release the Trance of Fear” or Jack Kornfield’s “Loving Awareness, Wisdom, and Compassion in Tough Times,” and our first evening salon in New York City’s Judson Memorial Church on “(Mis)Information Overload: Living in Truth in a Post-Truth Age,” we spoke to a growing need for reconnecting with ourselves and one another, cultivating compassion and resilience, and staying present in challenging times.

Our impact has grown along with the need. In 2016 and 2017, almost 12,000 people came to the Garrison Institute (a total of over 65,000 since we opened our doors in 2003).

We also reached thousands more by collaborating with various partners, and conducting offsite activities, trainings, and events, from New York City to Amman, Jordan.





REACHING OUT

For many thousands of people, the Garrison Institute has been a kind of sanctuary for inner exploration and renewal, but one founded with the intention of facilitating deep engagement with the world and addressing the most pressing challenges of our time. Those who come through our doors experience the transformative power of contemplation, then go back into the world better equipped to relieve suffering, foster compassion, and help build a better future. In 2016 and 2017, we intensified our focus on what happens beyond the walls of the Institute, and leveraged tangible regional, national, and global impacts.

We held some 40 events in New York City featuring compelling speakers and teachers such as “How Does Spiritual Practice Lead to Social Activism?” with Rabbi Rachel Cowan and Zen priest Norman Fischer at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, or “On Wisdom and Being” with Krista Tippett and Andrew Zolli at the 92nd Street Y, or “America’s Mindfulness Movement” with Daniel Goleman, Richard Davidson, and Jon Kabat-Zinn at the New York Society for Ethical Culture.

Our NYC events helped us reach new audiences and connect with new communities of practice. As part of our [Movements of the Spirit](#) work, we’re intentionally expanding our network of these communities across the US and internationally and finding new ways to engage with them. In 2017, we undertook the formation of a Garrison Institute Leadership Council composed of influencers in their 40s and younger who represent the current and next generation of entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders. They help us expand our outreach, and keep our content and programming cutting-edge.

Our [Transformational Leadership](#) work bore fruit regionally, nationally and beyond. For example, we partnered with the Good Work Institute (GWI), an independent non-profit launched by the online retailer Etsy, on its 2016 Hudson Valley (HV) Fellowship. GWI’s HV fellows are drawn from local businesses, community and nonprofit organizations, and government. They work to build “compassionate, regenerative, and equitable communities in the Hudson Valley and around the world.” When the Institute hosted a retreat for them, we found GWI’s mission was aligned with ours, and we decided to work more closely together. Members of our staff participated in the fellowship program, and Garrison Institute and GWI jointly organized an event on “Business as a Force for Good” with Daniel Goleman. We’re planning further joint events in the future.



In 2017, we formed a partnership with Mindful Leader, organizers of the annual Mindful Leadership Summit in Washington, DC, the world's largest gathering dedicated to mindfulness and compassion in the workplace. The Summit is growing exponentially, attracting thousands of leaders from around the world, and our partnership with Mindful Leader has given our transformational leadership work a national and global platform.

In 2016 and 2017, we expanded our offerings and broadened the focus of our [Care for the Caregivers](#) activities. They provide unique contemplative-based trainings for people who care for others, whether in their families or communities, or in the helping professions – teaching, healthcare, end-of-life care, humanitarian aid, social justice and more.

Nearly half of teachers report feeling chronically stressed, and 30 – 40% leave the profession within their first five years. Our CARE for Teachers and Mindful Schools trainings give teachers self-care tools and contemplative skills to cope with stress, avoid burnout,

“The retreat was life-changing for me: profound, grounding and illuminating. My work is rewarding, but I can feel bleak at times. Truly nourishing self-care helps make my activism sustainable long-term.”

RETREAT PARTICIPANT

and reanimate their teaching, so they and their students can flourish. Covered by [NPR](#) in 2016 and [The New York Times](#) in 2017, CARE for Teachers has attracted national recognition and growing demand. To help meet it, we've licensed the CARE for Teachers training, and it's now part of the national organization CREATE for Education.

79% of humanitarian aid workers report having experienced mental health problems themselves. Deployed in some of the world's most difficult environments, their work is stressful, dangerous, and puts them at risk for primary and secondary trauma, PTSD and burnout. The strain is growing along with climate



change, protracted conflicts and the refugee crisis. Our Contemplative-Based Resilience (CBR) Project helps aid workers counter the physical and psychological effects of chronic stress and exposure to trauma, so they can continue and thrive in their lifesaving work.

In 2016, we brought CBR to the Middle East for the first time, establishing operations in Amman, Jordan and holding the first CBR training there, which enabled us to have an impact on the Syrian refugee crisis. In 2017, we developed partnerships with more aid agencies, which sent their staffs to be trained, and we tripled the number of CBR trainees over 2016. 70% of them were women. In addition to Jordan and Syria, CBR trainees are now working in Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories and beyond. You can read about CBR's outcomes in detail in the summer 2017 issue of [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#).

CBR techniques designed for humanitarian aid workers and human rights defenders can also be adapted for social workers and others who do vital but stressful work that exposes them to trauma. In 2017, we held our first CBR training for people working in the affordable housing sector in the U.S. We're also planning CBR trainings for leaders of non-profits who work with and advocate for women.

Another way we extend the reach of our work beyond our walls is through thought leadership and communications. The Garrison Institute has built a wide, world-class network of teachers, writers, thinkers and innovators who are leaders and luminaries in their fields, and who help further our mission and carry our message. In addition to featuring them in our events, we're publishing their ideas in a wealth of online [blog posts](#) and [videos](#) and our annual print anthology *Lineages*, enabling us to reach more communities and wider audiences. People in over 200 countries are now reading and sharing our content and visiting our website.





GIVING THANKS

The Garrison Institute is a community of people working together towards positive social change. Our funders and supporters not only make our work possible, they are an integral part of it. They actively participate in our community, working with us in many different ways towards our shared goal of a more compassionate, resilient future. From Friends of the Garrison Institute and individual donors to major grant-making organizations and corporate sponsors, partnerships and in-kind support, we're incredibly fortunate to be part of a vital, engaged, collaborative circle of people and organizations.

We're deeply thankful for and mindful of their contributions and collegueship, and so are the people who participate in our retreats and gatherings. To see them express it in their own heartfelt words and images, click [here](#).

Scholarships Extend Our Reach

Generous support from our donors funds scholarships to make our retreats and workshops accessible to more people. We gave over \$200,000 in scholarships, awarding 256 in 2016 and 283 in 2017.

New support in 2016 and 2017 funded scholarships for people in specific professional fields and for specific retreats. The Angell Foundation, which promotes "high-impact programs that help people empower themselves," underwrote scholarships for educators, healthcare workers and frontline workers to attend Garrison Institute events. It also funded scholarships for specific Garrison Institute retreats in the humanities.

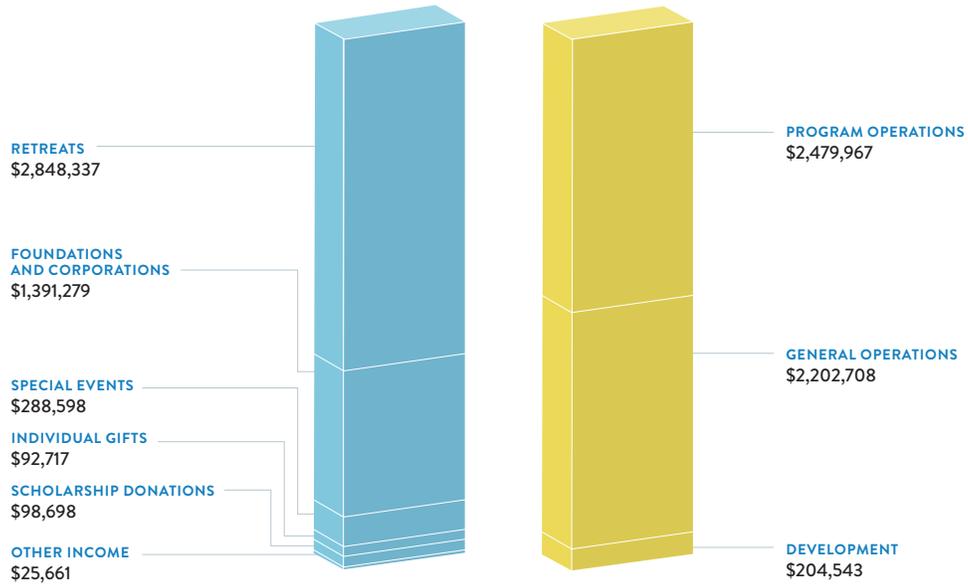
The Hemera Foundation's Contemplative Fellowships for educators and health care professionals and its Tending Space Fellowship Program for artists funded scholarships for people in these fields to attend our retreats and workshops.



2016-2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

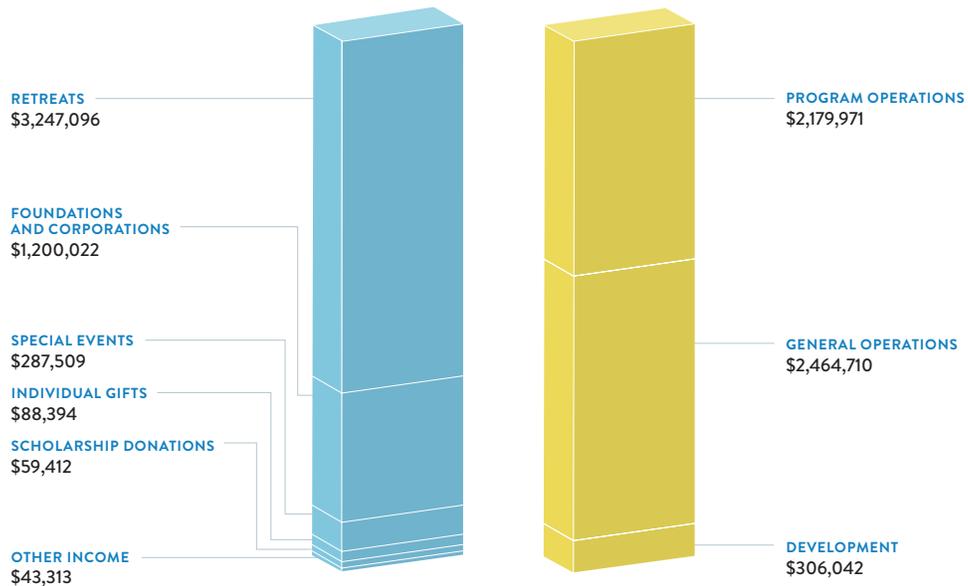
2016

INCOME \$4,745,291 / EXPENSES \$4,887,218



2017

INCOME \$4,925,746 / EXPENSES \$4,950,723



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The Garrison Institute is profoundly grateful for the support of its many funders, whose vision and generosity make our scholarships, retreats, workshops, events, and operations possible.

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