



BOB BROWN/TIMES-DISPATCH

Chicago-based Novel Coworking, which operates a 52,636-square-foot location in the Shockoe Slip section of Richmond, plans to open another floor of offices at the site as well as an outdoor balcony area.

ber of Gather for three years, said the coworking space offers flexibility for her business, J.T. Pharmacy Technician Training Program LLC, which trains pharmacy technicians. She rents a dedicated desk at Gather and reserves conference rooms there for her classes.

"As a small-business owner, it has saved me money," Trimiew said.

As Gather has grown to multiple locations, she said she also has an opportunity to expand her own business.

"I can hire teachers who can work out of the other locations," Trimiew said. "It would be a great expansion for my company as well. The more [Gather] grows, the more you can grow."



JOHN REID BLACKWELL/TIMES-DISPATCH

Balance RVA member Mary Beth Firouzabadian spends time with her 2-year-old daughter, Bella, in the coworking space's child care center.

### Health, wellness and child care

Balance RVA, a coworking space that opened in June in a former medical office on Patterson Avenue in Henrico, puts an emphasis on wellness and work-life balance for its members.

"We focus on helping our members achieve physical,

mental and emotional balance in all they do," said Juri Miller, the owner of Balance RVA.

"We have wellness activities through the month," Miller said. "We partner with a lot of local wellness providers. For example, all of our members get a free personal training session. They also get a free chiropractic exam."

As a working parent herself,

Miller's biggest motivation for opening Balance RVA, besides wellness, was to offer parents a coworking space with child care. Balance RVA has a staffed, on-site child care center. While the child care comes with an additional cost, members can earn time by volunteering in the center.

"We are attracting folks who

have young kids and need a place where they can actually bring their kids to work sometimes, or have an option other than putting them in off-site day care," Miller said.

The child care aspect was the main draw for Balance RVA members Mary Beth Firouzabadian and Melissa Barlow, who are both entrepreneurs with young children.

Firouzabadian, a freelance marketing consultant and writer with a home-based business, spends about three hours a day working at Balance RVA while her 2-year-old daughter, Bella, spends time in the child care.

"When I was introduced to this [coworking space], it was just a means to an end for me," Firouzabadian said. "Now, I've found out it is a holistic, balance, wellness-centric culture. I have really been blown away by the level of detail that they give to people like me at Balance."

Barlow, the owner of a business called Your Joyful Space that helps people work through the emotions of decluttering their homes, said she had been looking around for both coworking space and day care options for her 2-year-old daughter, Anora. "Lo and behold, this place has both," she said.

"I can get my work done and still pop in and have lunch with my daughter," she said. "There is a sense of community here, which is important for me as a parent."

Bunny Young, the owner of A Better Place Consulting, lives in Bumpass but commutes to Balance RVA with her trusty service dog, a Great Dane named Guinness, by her side.

Being an entrepreneur can be a lonely lifestyle, Young said, so entrepreneurs are drawn to coworking.

"For me, it was less about the office and more about the community," Young said. "I feel like you are more productive when you have a space to go to that is your own, where you're surrounded by people who are supporting you, versus being surrounded by laundry."

jblackwell@timesdispatch.com  
(804) 775-8123