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CONTACT:

Layne Amerikaner, Director of Development
A Wider Circle
301.675.7511 (direct)
301.608.3504 (office)
contact@awidercircle.org

A Wider Circle Executive Director Takes “No Bed” Pledge

Silver Spring, Md. – “If one of us is in poverty, we are all in poverty.” It is a powerful idea, and while many of us believe it, few of us live and breathe it each day.

A Wider Circle’s founder and Executive Director Mark Bergel has turned this phrase into “if you do not have a bed, I do not have a bed.” At the end of March, Bergel made the decision to give up his own bed, donating it to a family in need through A Wider Circle.

He shared that he would sleep on a couch or the floor until every person in the D.C. region – and then the country – had a bed in which to sleep. Far from a publicity stunt, A Wider Circle staff members sought Bergel’s permission to share this decision with the public.

A Wider Circle *is* getting more families off of the floor each day. Using all donated furniture, the organization furnished the homes of **1,674 children and adults** in the first quarter of 2009 – up from about 1,000 in the first quarter of last year.

One of those individuals was a Rockville woman named Alexis, who called for help and shared the following: "I have been smiling from ear to ear all day long. I am thanking God. My kids and I are sleeping on the floor – they get up for school and they are tired. My doctor says that I need to get up off the floor. I was so happy when I called you... knowing that I would get the beds was the light at the end of the tunnel."

About A Wider Circle: A Wider Circle, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Silver Spring, Md., utilizes a unique holistic approach to serving families in need throughout the capital region. The organization provides beds, dressers, cribs, and other basic need items to families transitioning out of shelters or simply living without life's necessities. A Wider Circle furnishes the homes of thousands of people per year – children and adults who are sleeping on the floor and living out of plastic garbage bags. They also go into low-income schools, shelters, and community centers to lead educational workshops on topics ranging from healthy self-esteem and stress management to resume writing and financial planning. In 2008 A Wider Circle was named “one of Greater Washington’s finest small charities” by the Catalogue for Philanthropy.

About Dr. Bergel: Bergel has served as the Executive Director of A Wider Circle for all seven years of its existence, bringing to his position both a high level of experience and knowledge in the field. Prior to founding A Wider Circle in 2001, Bergel spent 15 years managing health and wellness initiatives and serving as a part-time faculty member at American University. He is a nationally acclaimed speaker in the fields of poverty, health, and social connection and has been a featured guest on national television and radio programs. Bergel earned a Bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University and went on to receive both Masters and Doctoral degrees from American University. In 2008 Bergel received the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region’s Linowes Leadership Award for “unsung heroes” who are “extraordinary people... with compelling stories of courage and commitment.”

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