



**A WIDER CIRCLE**  
Health, Hope & Human Connection

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**A Wider Circle Hosts First Student Conference on Ending Poverty**

**Silver Spring, Md.** – “As one of us goes, so go all of us.” It was with these words that Dr. Mark Bergel set out to create an organization that would address the tragic conditions he saw throughout our nation’s capital region...and beyond. Disheartened by seeing grandmothers, mothers, and children living together in apartments with none of their basic needs met and little chance to break the cycles of poverty, he stopped the life he was living and started A Wider Circle in 2001. Bergel has now created The Student Conference on Ending Poverty to emphasize that **it is time to end poverty, not just talk about it.**

Saturday A Wider Circle hosted the Conference at American University's School of International Service. Students – and adults – of all ages heard from grassroots practitioners and those challenged by poverty. Attendees learned how they can make a personal impact on the lives of our region’s most vulnerable citizens with age-appropriate breakout sessions on topics such as childhood poverty and education, hunger in the DC region and throughout the U.S., and volunteerism and social change.

One breakout session, “The Experience of Poverty,” put the attendees in the mindset of those children and adults caught in the cycle of poverty. All participants received money, hats, gloves, food, and a personal story of an individual barely able to feed, clothe, and house themselves and their families. The money and belongings were taken away, the lights were turned off, and fans were turned on to simulate the cold, dark living conditions - without the necessary resources - of those living in poverty. While a far cry from the squalor that thousands of children and adults wake to each morning, hopefully the meaning of “If one of us is in poverty, we are all in poverty” struck a chord for these attendees and will encourage further collaborative efforts in the community.

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**About A Wider Circle:** A Wider Circle, [www.awidercircle.org](http://www.awidercircle.org), is a 501(c)(3) grassroots non-profit organization dedicated to helping individuals and families lift themselves out of poverty. At A Wider Circle, they believe that if one child is in poverty, every child is in poverty. If one mother is in poverty, every mother is in poverty. That is why A Wider Circle provides beds, dressers, and other basic need items to families that are moving out of shelters, escaping abuse, or simply living without having their basic needs met. It is why they run in-class and after-school programs in low-income schools and why they teach health and wellness classes at shelters and public housing facilities. A Wider Circle does it all with the positive energy needed to create real change to ensure that every child and adult has the opportunity to live well.

**About Mark Bergel:** Dr. Bergel is a nationally acclaimed speaker in the fields of poverty, health, and social connection. He has been a featured guest on local and national television and radio programs. Bergel earned a Bachelor's degree from Northwestern University and went on to receive both Master's and Doctoral degrees from American University. Today, as Founder and Executive Director of A Wider Circle, Bergel dedicates his life to helping individuals and families lift themselves out of poverty.

Though his organization has already served more than **50,000 children and adults** – providing urgently needed beds, dressers, cribs, and more to families across the region –Bergel does not go to sleep each night on a bed of his own. Rather, he ends his often 17-hour workdays by collapsing onto his couch or floor, pledging to not sleep in a bed until *every child and adult* in the country has a bed on which to sleep.

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