

A WIDER CIRCLE



The mission of A Wider Circle is simple: to end poverty for one individual and one family after another. It works in partnership with those it serves and with those seeking to help to ensure that every child and adult has the chance to succeed and the opportunity to live well.

History

In 2001, Dr. Mark Bergel was working as a health professional, part-time faculty member at American University, and consultant when he [1] _____ to deliver food to impoverished residents in the Washington, D.C. area. As he went home-to-home distributing food, he met families living without a secure food supply, without beds on which to sleep, and without [2] _____ to basic health and wellness information. He was startled by the depth of poverty, poor health, and general [3] _____ he witnessed in the region.

With no seed money but a strong conviction that we could do better for [4] _____ living in poverty – that we could end it – Mark decided to [5] _____ everything else in his life and converted his living room into a nonprofit office. He founded A Wider Circle with the mission of helping children and adults lift themselves out of poverty. His goal was to create an organization that [6] _____ address “the whole person” – with programs that would not only tend to people’s tangible needs but also to their “inner needs.”

Using donated furniture and a handful of [7] _____ volunteers and health professionals, A Wider Circle furnished the homes of 774 children and adults and delivered 33 educational workshops at local shelters in [8] _____ first year of service. He met with social workers, shelter managers, school personnel, and nonprofit leaders in the region, exploring how to best reverse the trends of more people getting into poverty than finding a path out of it.

A WIDER CIRCLE

Interns from local universities – and soon universities from across the country -joined the team each season. With each passing year, the organization became a larger and larger [9] _____ of the solution.

Today, A Wider Circle operates out of a 38,000 square-foot center, [10] _____ it purchased in May 2015. The organization has 50 staff members, 15 university interns, and more than 15,000 volunteers each year. It is their energy and [11] _____ that allows A Wider Circle to now furnish the homes of more than 16,000 children and adults each year and deliver [12] _____ programs to thousands of men, women, and children.

Though A Wider Circle has [13] _____ served more than 160,000 children and adults – through its educational programs and the provision of urgently needed beds, dressers, cribs, and more – Mark does not go to sleep each night on a bed of his own. Rather, he ends his 15-hour workdays by collapsing onto his couch or floor, pledging not to sleep in a bed until every child and adult in this country has a bed in which to sleep. Since A Wider Circle moved to its current location in 2008, Mark has worked seven days a week, [14] _____ week of the year.

The organization has come a long way since 2001 – and even since the first handful of years when it was run out of Mark's living room with only a few interns each season. More than 500 calls per day now come in from individuals and families in need, people who want to help in some way, and from agencies of all sizes looking for assistance in serving their clients.

A Wider Circle has been called “the quintessential grassroots movement” and has been twice named “one of the best” by the Catalogue for Philanthropy. The organization is poised today to be a major part of the national movement to end poverty, to bring about an end to poverty for one individual and one family after another.

If you could do something to help others, what would you do?

What comes between you and helping others?