

GLASSBOOK PROJECT

PRESS RELEASE
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Mothers Use Peer Support to Prevent Behavioral Health Issues

New GlassBook Project Exhibit and Advocacy Effort Addresses the Struggles of Mothers of Special Needs Children

WASHINGTON, DC - In June, nearly 20 mothers in northern New Jersey gathered to begin an advocacy and education effort that they hope will raise the national consciousness of what it is like to be a caregiver to a child with special needs. The mothers are the most recent GlassBook Project participants who have created an advocacy accordion glass book that they hope, through exhibition, will draw the attention of policymakers, agency and program administrators, community leaders and others. The book is titled "*Breathless: Mothers of Children with Special Needs.*"



In addition to the creation of the glass book, an [issue brief](#) was also created to highlight some of the struggles such as depression (2-3 times higher) and anxiety; illness and fatigue; isolation (family, friends, school, dating relationships, faith community, etc.); violence and uncontrollable behavior; job and career struggles and financial strain (from costs of specialists and impact on the job).

The mothers participating in this effort connected through a program called Mom2Mom, a peer support initiative of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. As with other populations like veterans and mental health consumers, these mothers have found great comfort, validation and connection through the peer support program.

The group strategized with national trauma expert Helga Luest to identify areas of advocacy that are also outlined in the [issue brief](#). They include:

- A national education campaign to raise awareness of what special needs families go through. This will help to reduce stigma and isolation, while building a broader support network.
- Peer support programs where mothers can provide support and validation. Peer support should be a medically supported and reimbursable expense and is essential in the prevention of behavioral and other health concerns.



- Behavioral support benefits for the mother so that she can remain an active caregiver, avoiding the costly placement of the child/adult in an institutional setting.
- Attention to integrated family care, where services are coordinated across systems, not only to support the health of the special needs child and the entire family.
- Workplace accommodations so that mothers can provide the needed care for their special needs children without the risk of job and wage loss.

The "*Breathless: Mothers of Children with Special Needs*" book will be unveiled:

WHEN: Thursday, July 7, 2011 from 2:30-4:30 pm.

WHERE: Paul Robeson Gallery
Rutgers University-Newark
350 Dr Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard
Newark, New Jersey

RSVP: with Dawn at 877-914-6662

About this Advocacy Effort

MOM2MOM is a peer support program based at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The MOM2MOM program was designed as the missing link for mothers of special needs children, realizing that these primary caregivers experience loss, depression, violence, isolation and more. Support is provided via a hotline, support groups, live chats and referrals. To learn more about MOM2MOM visit www.mom2mom.us.com or call 877-914-6662.

This advocacy effort was done in partnership with the [GlassBook Project](#), a collaborative effort of Artist Nick Kline and Witness Justice, a national nonprofit organization addressing the needs of survivors of trauma and violence. The GlassBook Project builds understanding of responses to trauma that often cause stigma or discrimination. Instruction for this collection was given by Sarah Stengle, artist; Nick Kline, artist; and Helga Luest, advocate and trauma expert. Mothers involved in the MOM2MOM program created the "Breathless" advocacy glass book that is planned for exhibition in New Jersey and the country to raise awareness and garner support.

Panel presentations and exhibition of the new glass books can be arranged by contacting GlassBookProject@witnessjustice.org.

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