



University News Service

News Release

Date October 3, 2012

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Mom2Mom Peer Support Program Receives Community Change Award from the New Jersey Black Issues Convention

NEW BRUNSWICK—Mom2Mom, a 24/7 peer-support program for mothers of children with special needs directed by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey–University Behavioral HealthCare, has been honored by the New Jersey Black Issues Convention’s (NJBIC) Community Change Award in the category of “Health & Human Services.”

The award was accepted by Mom2Mom peer counselor Safiyyah Muhammad on September 28 at the 30th Annual Black Leadership Conference’s Donald K. Tucker Leadership and Community Change Awards Banquet in New Brunswick.

“NJBIC recognizes the outstanding contributions that Mom2Mom has made to mothers with special needs children through its 24-hour helpline, peer support, telephone assessments, referral services and support groups in the community,” said Clyde C. Allen, NJBIC Conference Director.

The award reinforces the unique role Mom2Mom (877-914-6662; www.mom2mom.us.com) plays in assisting parents of special needs children with meeting their own needs. “Our purpose is to assist the primary caregivers of special needs children in achieving the support and services to strengthen their mental health and wellness,” says Mom2Mom Program Director Cherie Castellano. “We know there are few supports for parents’ mental health. And quite often, parents are unaware of services available to them and how to access them. We have demonstrated in less than three years of operation how we can significantly improve parents’ mental health by assisting in a variety of ways.”

Mom2Mom is committed to diverse community outreach in urban settings, especially Newark. In October 2011, the program opened a Newark Peer Support Helpline and Resource Center at UMDNJ–University Hospital to address a strong need for services in the Greater Newark community. Mom2Mom has also formed a special bond with the students, families and staff of John F. Kennedy School in Newark, a public school whose entire enrollment consists of children with developmental disabilities including autism as well as physical disabilities. Peer counselors from the Newark community lead monthly support groups—often a packed room—at the school.

Mom2Mom seeks a diverse workforce of peer counselors, and last year initiated a program for Spanish-speaking callers to connect with Spanish-speaking peer counselors.

Journalists interested in learning more about Mom2Mom can contact Patti Verbanas at 973.972.7273 or at verbanpa@umdnj.edu.

About Mom2Mom

Mom2Mom is a confidential, toll-free 24-hour helpline that moms who feel this added stress can call. It is staffed by specially trained “peer counselors” who themselves are moms of special needs kids and know the emotions and unique experiences that come with such extraordinary responsibilities. Mom2Mom has four primary services: a toll-free 24-hour helpline (1-877-914-6662); live online chat (at www.mom2mom.us.com); support groups; and outreach and awareness programs.

About The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) is New Jersey’s only health sciences university with more than 6,000 students on five campuses attending three of the state’s medical schools, its only dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health related professions, a school of nursing and New Jersey’s only school of public health. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a Level I Trauma Center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, which provides a continuum of healthcare services with multiple locations throughout the state.