

Mom2Mom Helps Mothers and Children Living In Poverty

By Julia Stauffer

Let's face it -- being a mom is hard. Coping with poverty while being a mother is even harder. The Mom2Mom Child Poverty Initiative helps mothers and children who are living in poverty in Vancouver, by pairing them with volunteers to create strength-based relationships. Mom2Mom supports mothers by bringing them into a relationship, helping them meet basic needs, and connecting them to a community of support.

There's a great need for this support -- BC has the fifth highest rate of child poverty in Canada. One in five children in this country lives in poverty.

The Mom2Mom Child Poverty Initiative was co-founded in

2011 by a family physician from the North Shore, Dr. Barb Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald had identified poverty as the root cause of the health issues that she was seeing in mothers and children who visited her clinic. The link between mothers' health and children's health is widely acknowledged -- when mothers are doing well, their children do well, and vice versa. By supporting mothers, Mom2Mom helps to improve the health and lives of both parent and child.

The foundation of Mom2Mom is the relationship between volunteers and participant moms, who meet once or twice per month, depending on the needs of the participant mom. Volun-

teers and moms meet for coffee, go on outings with or without their children, and develop a supportive relationship. Many mothers benefit simply by knowing that there's someone there for them. These relationships connect women to other women and, with time, to the larger community. As of March 31, 2017, Mom2Mom supports 60 mothers and their approximately 115 children.

Meeting up once a month may not lift a mom out of poverty, but it can still effect some significant change in women's lives. The impact isn't just felt by our participant moms, but by our volunteers. As a volunteer for the past year, I've discovered

that being part of Mom2Mom changes your life and the life of the mom you are connected with. It's a win/win.

Although Mom2Mom currently only serves moms in Vancouver, a good portion of our volunteer base is from the North Shore.

As awareness of Mom2Mom grows, so, too, does demand from women to join the Mom2Mom community. Mom2Mom is constantly recruiting new volunteers to support participant moms. Despite the Mom2Mom name, volunteers need not be moms themselves. To find out more about Mom2Mom and volunteer opportunities, visit www.m2mcharity.ca.



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