Dr. Mark Bergel

Dr. Mark Bergel is the Founder, President & CEO of A Wider Circle, a nonprofit organization founded in 2001. The mission of A Wider Circle is to end poverty by inspiring, fostering, and measuring individual and community level change.

In 2001, Dr. Bergel, then teaching at American University, volunteered along with his students to deliver food to families living in need in our nation’s capital region. He found himself in apartment after apartment where there were no beds, no dressers, and no living room or dining room furniture at all. He saw that the families living in these apartments had no access to the information, resources, and support readily available to others throughout our communities.

As a result, Dr. Bergel’s entire life changed profoundly – and so did the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and adults living in need. With no seed money, but a strong conviction that we could do better for those living in poverty, he converted his living room into a nonprofit office and founded A Wider Circle.

Dr. Bergel has led the organization’s growth from its early years operating out of his living room to its current 35,000 square-foot facility and its status as a primary source of support for more than 25,000 individuals per year and hundreds of government, social service, and nonprofit agencies in the nation’s capital region. A Wider Circle provides basic need items, long-term support, and comprehensive neighborhood programming. All of A Wider Circle’s programs are replicable and exportable to low-income communities throughout the country. To date, A Wider Circle has served more than 225,000 children and adults, and hosts more than 30,000 volunteers every year.

Despite this success, Dr. Bergel does not go to sleep each night on a bed of his own. Rather, he ends his 15-hour workdays on the 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. Dr. Bergel works seven days a week, every week of the year.

Dr. Bergel is also a nationally acclaimed speaker and has been a featured guest on numerous television and radio programs. His efforts to end poverty have led to his selection as a CNN Hero, Washingtonian of the Year, and as one of PEOPLE Magazine’s “All-Stars Among Us,” recognizing individuals who have made incredible contributions in their communities. He has also received the Roscoe R. Nix Distinguished Community Leadership Award, the Cyrus A. Ansary Medal, the Dr. Augustus White III Award for Civic Engagement and Service, the American University Alumni Recognition Award, the Greater DC Cares’ Essence of Leadership Award, the Community Foundation for the National Capital Area’s Linowes Leadership Award, the Jac. J. Lehrman-George M. Pikser Award, the Smart CEO Cornerstone Award, and the Andrea Jolly President’s Award. Dr. Bergel was also recently inducted into the Montgomery County Business Hall of Fame.

Dr. Bergel earned a Bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University and went on to receive both Masters and Doctoral degrees from American University.