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## Meet The Board

In the past several months, there have been a few changes to the Mothers & More Board of Directors. During the annual member meeting in June, the group found itself saying good bye to some wonderful ladies, said hello to some news ones, and have even kept a couple of familiar faces around for a little bit longer. We are delighted to announce the addition of three new board members: Chris Cameron, Wokie Nwabueze and Estelle Erasmus, and with great anticipation, we present the 2011-12 Board of Directors.

The continuing board president, Tara Brettholz, has been an active member in Mothers & More since 2007 and has held many chapter positions including leader, treasurer, webmaster and publicity chairs. She started 'Power of a Purse' in 2009, which aims to raise awareness about key social and economic issues that affect mothers' lives and well-being. Currently employed as a Quality Control & Training Officer for a large national financial planning firm, Brettholz spoke about Mothers & More stating it "has had an enormous impact on my life. At a time I needed friendship and support, I found this organization. My daughter and I have made friends for life, and when I was ready to find my 'more,' Mothers & More was there with opportunity and yet more support." Brettholz is ready to "work to discover what the mothers of today want - and need - from [the] organization to make sure it continues to achieve its mission of support, education and advocacy."



Tara Brettholz

A new addition to the board, vice president Chris Cameron, was originally a member of Mothers & More from 1995 to 2004. She reconnected with the group "to ease a cross-country relocation," which helped her become "acutely aware of the value that our organization has for 'seasoned' mothers and mothers combining caregiving with work outside the home."

Now a member of Northern Virginia, Chapter 143 she says, "Mothers & More was critical to my successful transition from professional to stay-at-home mom 13 years ago. Sharing the joys and challenges of motherhood and encouraging each other



Chris Cameron

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*FORUM* is publically published monthly by Mothers & More. The views represented in it are not necessarily those of the editors or of the Mothers & More membership.

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in aspirations deeply enriched my early years of motherhood. When life became busy with kids in school, I left Mothers & More but maintained strong connections with many of my original Mothers & More friends.”

In her time away from the group, Chris found the skills she had sharpened as co-leader and webmaster useful as she found herself “seeking out leadership roles in the PTA and ultimately running for city council and mayor.” She plans to use her experience in that arena, as well as her legislative and grant writing skills, and background of research and teaching (psychology) to give back to Mothers & More, hoping to bring “a broad perspective to the board, having been a new mom and a ‘seasoned’ mom as well as a member of three different chapters over the last 12 years.” She says, “I am eager to build a stronger Mothers & More by using our diversity as mothers to support our common need for more!”

“I hope to give back to the organization that has given so much to me,” says returning secretary Paula Marcotte. Previously a member of Broome/Tioga, NY Chapter 52, (and currently unchaptered), she served as her former chapter’s co-leader, advocacy chair, new member liaison, as well as book club, seasoned moms and playgroup coordinator and regional manager. A member of Mothers & More since 1995, she is currently the loop moderator for both the seasoned moms and writing moms member discussion loops.



**Paula Marcotte**

“From the time that I joined, Mothers & More has been such a valuable resource to me. From helping me to cope with the early years, and continuing support and encouragement during the ‘terrible teens,’ fellow members have always rallied [together]. The fun and advice I have received from members from all over the country every subject on our member loops keeps me feeling refreshed and as if I am on the right track. The camaraderie and non-judgmental nature of “my” Seasoned Moms Loop is truly a beautiful thing!”

A former nursing-assistant-turned-free-lance-writer, Marcotte is eagerly looking to the group to “continue moving forward in using new technology and at the same time keeping our mission alive; that of support for women as both mothers and people.”

Newly elected director and author Estelle Sobel Erasmus, has been a member of Mothers & More since 2009, and is currently active in Bergen, NJ Chapter 40. Currently holding the chapter’s reins of advocacy coordinator and newsletter copy editor, she also coordinated their ‘Power of the Purse’ and developed a partnership with ‘Dress for Success Hudson County’ for the 2011 campaign.



**Estelle Sobel Erasmus**

## Submissions

Forum accepts first-person essays of any length, humor, poetry, photography, and art from **members**. We also accept any ideas or topical clippings you many want to send for our use. To contribute to the Forum, please send electronic submissions by email to [info@mothersandmore.org](mailto:info@mothersandmore.org) or printed submissions by mail to P.O.Box 31, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Indicate "Forum Submission" on the subject line or envelope. We do not accept faxed or handwritten submissions.

Note: Mothers & More is not intended as a substitute for medical and/or psychological care of those in need of such care for themselves or their children. Although every measure has been taken to make the information in the Forum as complete and accurate as possible, no Mothers & More member, past or present, shall be liable for any damages resulting from the use or misuse of information contained herein.

Currently writing a weekly parenting column for AOL/Patch Fort Lee for [examiner.com](http://examiner.com) (Jersey City location), Sobel Erasmus credits Mothers & More for providing "a starting point with which to create my new life as a mother after the birth of my daughter in 2009. The organization has helped me meet new friends, has focused my attention on important issues and regulations impacting women and mothers, and has enabled me to use my skills to help my chapter support mothers in need." She hopes that "by serving on the board, I can combine my passion for addressing financial and emotional issues facing mothers and the often incorrect perception of the "value" of a mother, with my journalism background and experience in developing partnerships, and to build a better future for all women and mothers."

"Mothers & More has helped me to connect with amazing women as I assumed and embraced my new identity and role as a mother," says Wokie Nwabueze, newly elected director. "The connections I've made have been invaluable and I will always cherish this organization for making those connections possible. As the mother of two girls, I am fully conscious of how important it is for me to be my best self as my daughters watch me to learn how to be a girl, a woman and quite possibly, a mother in the future. The support and resources I've gained through Mothers & More have only made it easier for me to be the role model for them that I want to be."



**Wokie Nwabueze**

An attorney and conflict coach, Nwabueze has been member of Mothers & More since 2008. Active in the Maplewood/South Orange, NJ Chapter 128, she has served as co-leader. She hopes to use her "corporate, legal and entrepreneurial training to help Mothers & More expand its reach, enhance its membership, continue to secure its financial footing and work to impact mothers by sharing our voice in various legislative, educational and social arenas."

We wish a fond farewell and a big thank you to outgoing volunteer board members Susanna Clark, Heather Krajcarski-Hunt, Amy Swygert and Andrea Boidman. They served with their unique skill sets and valuable experiences, which made them a great asset to our organization. Mothers & More thanks them and wishes them the best in their future endeavors.

As we look toward a new year with endless opportunities, the new board members are already hard at work adding their own enthusiasm and talents to the mix, promising great things in 2012.

### Our Mission

Mothers & More is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of mothers through support, education and advocacy. We address mothers' needs as individuals and members of society, and promote the value of all the work mothers do.

### Our Beliefs:

- A mother is more than any single role she plays at any given point in her lifetime. She is entitled to fully explore and develop her identity as she chooses: as a woman, a citizen, a parent or an employee.
- All the work mothers do – whether paid or unpaid – has social and economic value.
- Caregiving work is real work with real social and economic value.
- All women deserve recognition and support for their right to choose if and how to combine parenting and paid employment.
- All mothers, all children and all families are unique. We respect the wisdom of each mother to decide how to care for her children, her family and herself.
- Mothers have the right to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities without incurring social and economic penalties.
- The transitions women make into and through motherhood are challenging and can be difficult.

Together, mothers are powerful.



## Too Connected?

**Jenn Steinberg**

The cancer diagnosis of an elementary school classmate. A cousin's engagement. The birth of a son to a former boyfriend and his wife. Pictures of a sibling holding a chainsaw in one hand and beer in the other. All things I saw/found out about on Facebook. I've tried to explain to my head-shaking mother why Facebook matters, what I get from knowing the minute by minute details of the lives of people I haven't seen in years and the people I see daily. I left my hometown almost 14 years ago and swore I would make new connections. Yes, I did make those connections but thanks to social media, I still find myself interacting with those people from my past.

In March, I gave birth to a second daughter who made her debut on Facebook within an hour of her arrival. Congratulations poured in from all parts of my life. When my dad called my grandparents to tell them the news, my grandfather informed him that he knew all about Tessa because he had seen it on Facebook. I love that my grandfather can watch my life from afar, but something keeps nagging at me - am I so connected that I'm disconnected?

A friend from high school is trying to organize a 14-years-since-high school gathering in mid-August and although there really isn't any reason why I couldn't go, I replied "maybe" to the Facebook invitation because I'm just not sure what I would say to everyone in person. Yes, I can "like" the news article you posted, I can enjoy pictures of your recent European vacation, but I feel a distinct disconnect about meeting in person. I don't want to be like that girl in the Toyota commercial, sitting at her computer, talking about her 600+ friends while her parents go mountain biking. I think this gathering is a chance for me to practice what I'm always preaching - that social media can make us closer. I guess that means I'm heading to Long Island in the middle of August and while I'm at it, I'd better find a sitter for some upcoming Mothers & More meetings because I can't let these relationships linger in the virtual world when I have a chance to engage them face-to-face.

*Jenn Steinberg is a Mothers & More Senior Manager for Communications, and a proud member of the Delaware County, PA Chapter 288. She loves the Internet, her husband, and two daughters, but not necessarily in that order. Oh, and you can find her Facebooking and Twittering for herself, as well as on behalf of Mothers & More all the time!*



## Counter-cultural Rebellion in Sensible Heels

Monica Gallagher

There's something about being one of the least formally educated women in the room that can really push the insecurity button. A master's is the new bachelor's, and I don't have one. Yet no one had forced me to attend the alumnae/student mixer at my alma mater. I had gone out of my way to find childcare and was there of my own accord. I had the desire to meet some smart, interesting women who also love the liberal arts, and also a slightly subversive agenda: to throw motherhood - often the rabbit in the room when women discuss career plans and ambition - into the "career conversation" at some point.

Our role as liberal arts alumnae was to network with the undergraduates, educating them in ways to use their liberal arts degrees. My table was full of long resumes and talk of constantly moving on toward new professional challenges, as well as master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. At this career mixer, and at my alma mater in general, intentionality and a sense of personal control are highly valued. Motherhood was not mentioned once, until I referred to it in my own introduction. There was an uncomfortable silence when I said aloud that I value the way my job works with care-giving. I had the sense I had broken a taboo, an unspoken rule. I had anticipated this reaction; my reference to motherhood, unlike some important career steps, *was* planned. The successful self-employed editor - whose professional achievements I had specifically complimented - wouldn't make eye contact with me the rest of the evening.

My career path - my life - may not make an effective didactic guide for many ambitious young students. I found my way into my current field - social service - through serendipity. I sought out an intellectually stimulating position that left time for lots of time with our children. It drew on a college volunteer experience I had years before. I even chose to disclose my pregnancy in the interview, although at

three months I could have still hidden it. It was a calculated risk. After a few other interviews with illegal questions, I didn't want to work for anyone who considered my parenthood a major liability. I've stayed 10 years, at just 20 hours a week.

When I think of my life and that of my family right now, the best metaphor may be my favorite photos and blogs of certain people's gardens: complex, lush, multi-layered refuges of diverse plants, whimsical recycled art, and productive vegetable plots. So often, when I scroll to the accompanying text, it says something self-deprecating such as, "I confess I break all the important rules! I plant flowers before shrubs (gasp) and have placed shade plants in sun areas at the beginning . . . I overlooked the importance of good soil for a long time."

Yet, these gardens are amazing places, and obviously places of great *bounty* and joy to their creators. Does it matter that their designers didn't follow the recommended steps? I'm not sure whether these gardeners are bragging, educating, or apologizing about the broken rules; I suspect it's a little of all three.

My career is a lot like one of these verdant but low-budget gardens. I broke many of the rules of a certain strain of feminism getting here. It was work not to sound apologetic for my more serendipitous process when faced with the elegant buffet at my alma mater. In that setting, I had to be very intentional about representing my career and lifestyle choices in a matter-of-fact, confident way. I tried to channel the school moms I'd met recently: happy, healthy women, working full-time with flexibility, part-time, and not at all, married or divorced, staying involved with their kids, facing unplanned joys and hurdles and contributing plenty to society. I kept these women and mothers in mind as I listened to the conversation and sipped my drink. They're also a product of our time, as I am, and they aren't apologizing for whom they're not — as professionals, as people, or as mothers. I'm glad I met these secure, warm women, because I needed to remember them, especially that evening. These women are my current heroes. And we all need relatable heroes.

The Career Services office may not invite me back next year. Our family's involvement in activism and a unique spiritual community don't necessarily show on my resume. I was honest with the bright, fresh-faced students about the fact I tacked on a teaching certification to my dual degrees *just* to satisfy my parents' question of "What are you going to DO with Spanish and English majors?" I was also honest when asked, "How do you keep your emotions separate in social services?" (I replied laughingly, "Well, sometimes I *don't*.")

Walking across the manicured campus after the mixer, I wondered about the intelligent and charming first-year students I met. They may not choose motherhood at all. They may feel they can't afford it. But if they do, through birth, marriage or adoption, will they feel blindsided by childcare choices no one ever mentioned? Will the complexity of negotiating their careers and their children's needs leave them disillusioned? Will they accrue education debt they can't pay off? Will they

wrongly assume other women are magically working it out, because they don't remember anyone preparing them for the tension that almost always exists between care-giving, self-care, and professionalism? Will they have a strong support system of family and friends to help them juggle? Will they remember that I, a product of intuition and serendipity as well as education and ambition, dared to intentionally mention the "m" word at a women's college career event?

I know I will, because my ego is still smarting a bit from the reception.

*Monica Gallagher may earn her master's eventually, but is still paying off her bachelor's 14 years later. She has used her critical thinking and research skills at work and also at home to rehaul her politics, spirituality, religion, cooking, writing and some of her more problematic personality traits. She is a member of Twin Cities East, MN Chapter 299.*



## **Mothers & More Power of a Purse... 14,900 Powerful Purses**

Mothers & More members have collected an impressive total of 14,900 purses since the Mother's Day *Power of a Purse* Campaigns started 3 years ago. Chapters across the United States have partnered with non-profit organizations in our members' immediate communities to distribute the collected purses and, in some cases, donations of personal items to fill those purses. Donated purses, along with Mothers & More events that celebrate the power of those purses, directly reach mothers who already face the effects of real financial vulnerability in their daily lives.

Now more than ever, today's families rely on the income mothers contribute to essential household expenses like food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education. Single, divorced or widowed mothers are five times more likely to live in poverty than married mothers. And we now know that the single greatest predictor that a woman will end up in bankruptcy is having a child. No matter where she resides on the social ladder, there is "power in her purse" when a mother has money of her own to control, to act on purchasing decisions, and to provide for herself and her children.

Organizations benefitting from *Power of a Purse* included women's shelters, local YWCAs, Dress for Success, and many other local women's organizations. Many chapters



**Rochester, NY Chapter 9**

partnered with businesses to generate donations and raise awareness of the financial issues facing mothers. We are excited to share some highlights from our 2011 Mother's Day *Power of a Purse* campaign.

### **Chapters Highlights...*Power of a Purse* Community Outreach**

Greater Raleigh/Durham, NC Chapter 331 collected 125 purses from shoppers through their partnership with their local Dillard's department store. They donated these purses to InterAct of Wake County, an agency that provides safety, support, and awareness to victims and survivors of domestic violence and rape/sexual assault.

Northeast Ohio, OH Chapter 163 placed bins at a local mall and collected 701 purses for the WomenSafe domestic violence shelter. And New York City, NY Chapter 320 joined forces with numerous businesses to collect 60 purses, as well as items to go in them, for women living at the YWCA of the City of New York. They also hosted an event, including a presentation on budgeting during which they presented the purses.

Wesley Chapel, FL Chapter 295 hosted a family fun carnival called "It's PURSEonal" and collected just under 600 purses to donate to two different domestic violence shelters in Tampa and neighboring Pasco County. Twin Cities East, MN Chapter 299 partnered with local businesses, many of them for the second year in a row, and collected 500 purses for the clients of Tubman, Minnesota's largest multi-service domestic violence agency.

Other chapters looked within their own membership for donations, such as the Greater Johnson County, KS Chapter 186 which donated 38 purses to the Kansas City Women's Employment Network. Inside the purses were a small bottle of hand sanitizer and a small purple change purse, both displaying the Mothers & More logo. The Champaign County, IL Chapter 258 also collected 38 purses for donation to the Center for Women in



**Twin Cities East, MN Chapter 299**



**Orlando, FL Chapter 216**



**Tuscon, AZ Chapter 333**

Transition. This was their first year participating in *Power of a Purse* and most of their donations came from members, family and friends.

It was also exciting to see new chapters that were quick to get involved with *Power of a Purse*, including Greater Mercer Area, NJ Chapter 338 who collected 125 purses as well as suits, wallets and cosmetics for the local Dress for Success chapter.



Tuscon, AZ Chapter 333

### ***Empowered PURSE...Moms Style Their Financial Futures***

Mothers & More launched *Empowered PURSE* during Mother's Day Campaign 2011. *Empowered PURSE*, developed by Melissa Hoyer, certified financial planner and member of Boulder, CO Chapter 209, is a series of conversations that guides moms in a fun and unique way on their own money journey. *Empowered PURSE* offers mothers a path for exploring their relationship with money and where it fits into their values and everyday lives.

*Empowered PURSE* creates the essential space mothers need to give their futures and personal financial picture the time and attention it deserves. Moms will discover the source of their own attitudes toward money and take a closer look at how these attitudes shape their current situation and future relationship with money. Most importantly, mothers will walk away with a plan that makes it possible to live with greater intention and reach personal goals.

Participants in the *Empowered PURSE* program have discovered that they appreciate having the time and space to contemplate and discuss their thoughts and feelings about money and its role in their lives. Several women also commented that they realized they wanted to take a larger and more active role in the financial decision-making in their families. Participants found the program meaningful and helpful, and said that they would encourage their friends to take part in *Empowered PURSE*. *Empowered PURSE* meeting guides are available for member use throughout the year.



Orlando, FL Chapter 216

