

NOW-NJ Chapter Mothers' Economic Rights Task Force (Mothering NOW)

*** Mission Statement**

The NOW Mothers' Economic Rights (Mothering) Chapter Task Force believes that "every mother is a working mother" and that all the work mothers do should be valued and have monetary value. In the words of National NOW, "(we) actively support full rights for homemakers (mothers/unpaid care givers) and recognition of the economic value of the vital service they perform for family and society. We support federal and state legislation and state and community programs that take action to make marriage an equal economic partnership." Through education, advocacy and community building we hope to bring a new generation of feminists into awareness and action.

*** Who We Are**

There are currently two NOW Mothers' Economic Rights (Mothering) Task Force Chapter Task Forces: Morris Mothering NOW and South Jersey/AP Mothering NOW. The Mothering NOW Task Forces are comprised of feminist mothers, most with young children. Many of our members are women who are in the salaried workforce and also work as unpaid caregivers to their children. We want to offer our members a venue to discuss their mothering experiences in ways that they often do not in other settings. We encourage an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding while inviting spirited discourse.

The chapter NOW Mothers' Economic Rights (Mothering) Task Force discusses the general chapter evening meeting issues, while focusing on the economics of motherhood. Through activism, we hope to bring positive change to legislative policy that affects women and families. We offer opportunities to participate in NOW sponsored events, local and online activism/advocacy and national conferences/forums.

*** One Year Later**

Over the course of one year, the original Morris County NOW group of two mothers has become a group of ten. There are currently two Mothering NOW Task Forces; Morris County NOW and South Jersey NOW. We have received great press coverage from regional papers (see the Star Ledger and Daily Record articles).

When we began, The Morris County NOW chapter president suggested that the Mothering Task Force founders read "The Price of Motherhood", one of the most important books written on the subject of mother's economic rights. The author of the book, Ann Crittenden, had been interviewed for the Morris County chapter's TV program. The book provided our fledging Mothering NOW Task Force the blue print for a new movement.

A "Mothers' Economic Rights" resolution was passed unanimously at our 2004 NOW-NJ State Conference. This resolution is the basis for what we hope will become the nation's first state-level "Mothers Economic Rights" Task Force within our organization.

The members of our chapter MER task force have also participated as representatives of NOW-NJ at the National Association of Mothers Centers 2004 Conference where we discussed the future of the mothers' rights movement with Judith Stadtman Tucker, Lori Slepian, Linda Lisi Jurgens, Peggy O'Mara, Andrea O'Reilly and Ann Crittenden.

Fostering the Mothering NOW movement

Mother's rights and issues pertaining to the job of mothering have moved to the forefront in the national and international dialog on women's rights. We are in a unique position to be part of a vital new force within the 21st century women's movement.

Mothers in this country need the strength, resources and knowledge of NOW. Before we can tackle issues central to the mother's rights movement (such as Universal Childcare, Social Security Credits for Unpaid Caregivers, Women-Friendly Workplaces, Breast-milk Education, Custody Rights, Unpaid Caregiver Tax Credits, Gender Disparities in Medical Research, Universal Healthcare, etc.) we need to establish a minimum number of Mothering NOW members. We feel that the best way to recruit those members is in our local chapters.

How do we begin to accomplish this goal?

* Our target members are mothers and mothers' rights supporters. Women with younger children often have problems attending regular evening NOW meetings. They either consider themselves feminists or have feminist beliefs and are interested in finding out more about NOW. They are seeking community as well as the opportunity to involve themselves in activism.

* We want to open the dialog locally, through casual contacts, word of mouth, local politics and social events. At official daytime meetings, we offer a non-judgmental, child friendly environment -- an atmosphere of sisterhood and acceptance.

* We champion mother's rights issues through our meetings and increase our knowledge base through consciousness raising, programs that include expert speakers, media presentations and reading lists.

* We work to build coalitions with other mothering based, women's organizations such as Mothers & More, MOTHER/NAMC, Mothers Acting Up and the Mothering Movement. We send representatives of Morris County Mothering NOW to conferences and events that support issues we have in common with other organizations.

*We foster positive, mother-friendly press and marketing and advertise in local media geared toward businesswomen and care-givers.

* We develop our mother chapters through Mothering NOW grassroots activities:

- Organizing actions that can be accomplished at home, online or locally.

- Growing chapter membership and name recognition.

- Building the interest in sister chapters and encouraging a nationwide movement.

* We consult regularly with our parent NOW chapters for guidance, and encourage Mothering NOW members to participate in general chapter activities.

*We adhere to the general mission and beliefs of the National Organization for Women and in doing so bring its message to a larger audience.

For more information regarding NOW-NJ Mothers' Economic Rights Task Force, Chapter MER TF development, or to receive additional action kits, please contact Laurie Pettine at mertf_info@nownj.org or 973-214-2643.