



Mommy Grads

Spring 2010 Update

Laying the Groundwork

Subsequent to winning the WSI award, the first few months of Mommy Grads was spent laying the groundwork for the program's operations. This included:

- Adding structure to the program concept. This included deciding to locate within one university or college campus. Settling on criteria for program participants (year of study, income, etc.) as well as mentors, creating a programmatic schedule, and beginning to identify workshop topics and potential instructors.
- Preparing written materials.
- Preparing language and a structure for the Mommy Grads website as well as working with a Mommy Grads participant to add a blog.
- Establishing a relationship with Temple University. Early on, the decision was made to operate Mommy Grads from a central campus location, so that the student mothers would be able to easily attend meetings.

Mentor Selection

After completing some of the initial activities to put the program in place, the focus turned to identifying mentors who would provide guidance to the Mommy Grads students. In-person meetings with the Mommy Grads mentors took place at two orientation meetings, held in July and August of 2009. Both of these meetings were held at the home of Nancy Lanham of WSI. Along with wine and cheese, Nancy provided a comfortable space for the new mentors. The six mentors, who hail from a variety of different professional experiences, from banking to human resources to nursing, all had very personal and touching reasons for wanting to be involved with the program.

The Mommy Grads

The majority of the Mommy Grads were found through responses to flyers posted on Temple University's campus in late August/early September. Mommy Grads' eight students (two of which only participated for the fall semester) included 1 freshman, 2 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 2 seniors whose academic majors include public relations, biology, journalism, psychology, and business. The students' children range in age from 2 months to 7 years old. In their applications, the Mommy Grads gave different reasons for wanting to be involved in the program- some wanted to learn about resources for flexible daycare, some wanted to learn strategies for time management, some wanted help in accessing

higher paid jobs and some just wanted access to a supportive network. Overall, the group is made up of extremely driven, positive women, who are eager to create a good life for themselves and their children.

The Mommy Grads meet the Mentors

During the Fall 2009 semester Mommy Grads were matched with mentors. In matching mentors and participants, bios were written for each mentor and student. Mentors and Mommy Grads were matched based upon mutual selection and interest. Upon making the pairings, the students and mentors were all invited to a joint meeting, where they were to meet in person.

The mentoring kickoff meeting took place on Tuesday, October 20th. The mentors and mentees initially met over hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, and then participated in an exercise where they signed mentoring agreements and identified goals for their mentoring relationships.

Workshops

The Mommy Grads program has held the following workshops:

- The first workshop, held on November 3rd, focused on Time Management and was led by Mia Farrell of Leave it 2 Mia events. Mia is a successful wedding and event planner, who is also a task master and master organizer. During the workshop, she shared tips on getting and staying organized and juggling multiple projects and responsibilities. As a takeaway, each student left with a brand new Franklin Covey planner that they were encouraged to try using for at least thirty days.
- The second Mommy Grads workshop, held on November 24th, was led by Jamie Gauthier, Mommy Grad founder and director, and focused on study skills. Topics of discussion included identifying blocks of time for studying, prioritizing and planning assignment and how to take effective notes. In addition to our discussion around study skills, the group had a visit from Yolanda McCleary, the Community Outreach Coordinator from LIFT Philadelphia. LIFT is a national nonprofit that uses college-level student volunteers to work with community members on a range of issues, from employment to housing to public benefits screenings and enrollment.
- The December 1st workshop was centered on financial management. At this workshop, Karen Bailey, Vice President of Workplace Banking, of PNC Bank, taught the students techniques to monitoring and tracking spending, and creating and sticking to a budget.
- On January 19th, the workshop, given by Cassandra Jackson of Temple University's Russell Conwell Center, focused on priority, goal setting, and time management.
- The February 16th meeting focused on accessing resources. These include scholarships, internship opportunities, and resources pertaining to healthcare, childcare, and housing.

Mommy Grads other workshops for the remainder of the semester included programs on resume writing and networking, studying for finals and stress reduction.

Mommy Grads: Future Plans

The vision for Mommy Grads is to evolve into a 501C3, consisting of resources centers at various universities. Each resource center would:

- Act as a hub for the Mommy Grads workshops and mentoring program
- Contain a computer lab and study area
- House a volunteer daycare, where moms could leave children for brief periods of time while studying
- House staff trained in benefits access software to connect student moms to available resources
- House resources for single mothers interested in returning to school

Mommy Grads was recently selected as one of Leadership Philadelphia's Junto projects. As a result, a group of 10 individuals with backgrounds including law, nonprofit management, nonprofit fundraising, and event planning will volunteer their time over the next few months to a project that builds the capacity and creates a formal business plan for the Mommy Grads Program .

Thanks to The Women of Social Innovation and their investment in the Mommy Grads Program, Mommy Grads has proven that there is indeed a need for a program to support and encourage single mothers to continue and complete their higher education and reach their goals.