

Moms on a Mission

Compassion When Foster Kids Become Mothers

Entertainment industry moms constantly help one another out, whether sharing parenting tips or recommendations on Mommy & Me classes. “We have a lot of resources, which some of us may take for granted,” says actress and writer Jules Leyser, 42, who’s married to Channel 4 executive Crispin Leyser and is the mother of 2-year-old Felix. But there’s a vulnerable group of mothers who rarely have access to such resources: young women in foster care. So Leyser and four other advocates — activist and documentary producer Yasmine Delawari Johnson, 42, and Kelly Zajfen, 35, a former model who’s now a clothing designer (both are married to attorneys at Ziffren Brittenham); Danika Charity, 34 (a doula whose husband is a commercial director); and Emily Lynch, 37 (wife of director David) — banded together a year ago to found the Alliance of Moms. It has rapidly grown to 100 members, including actress Jordana Brewster (“They’ve created something that’s really snowballed,” says the 35-year-old mom of Julian, 23 months). Together, the women — an auxiliary group of the Alliance for Children’s Rights — create educational programs for pregnant and parenting foster teens, connect them to doulas and raise funds for ACR (nearly \$100,000 so far). “Los Angeles has the largest number of kids in foster care, 28,000, of anywhere in the country,” says Delawari Johnson, adding that 75 percent of girls in foster care are pregnant by 21 — a rate attributed to attachment issues and limited access to reproductive health care. “It’s a big cycle to break,” says Janis Spire, president and CEO of ACR, which also works with L.A.’s Department of Children and Family Services on pregnancy prevention. “What’s great about the Alliance of Moms is their hands-on involvement,” she adds. Alliance client Ariel Bass, 20, who spent most of her childhood in the foster system and gave birth to son Adrian four months ago, wants to be a social worker. “The Alliance of Moms has shown me the difference between the life I was living and the life you should want to live,” she says. “I don’t want Adrian to ever want.” — DEGEN PENER

Photographed by Christopher Patey on July 31 at Lombardi House in Los Angeles



“I wouldn’t have tried the Alliance program if it wasn’t for the fear that my son would become me. The worst thing you could ever do is make someone else suffer the things that you hated most in your life.” *Jessica Chandler, former client, now a social worker for L.A. County*



- 1 Emily Lynch
- 2 Jordana Brewster
- 3 Julian, 23 months, Brewster’s son
- 4 Jessica Chandler
- 5 Noah, 8, Chandler’s son
- 6 Danika Charity
- 7 Molly D’Amecourt
- 8 Jules Leyser
- 9 Sara Riff
- 10 Erin Ziering
- 11 Kelly Zajfen
- 12 Yasmine Delawari Johnson
- 13 Malala, 2, Delawari Johnson’s daughter
- 14 Lenore Douglas
- 15 Khatira Brown
- 16 Maverick, 5, Delawari Johnson’s son
- 17 Ariel Bass
- 18 Adrian, 4 months, Bass’ son
- 19 Jonah, 5, Chandler’s son

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