

SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT



MAMMAS & MELODIES



KEYA THAKKAR & SARAH FARAH

**ARTS AND LITERATURE
PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICINE**

ADVISORS: DR. GLORIA BACHMANN, MD MMS & DR. JUANA HUTCHINSON-COLAS, MD MBA





RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK

Institute for Women's Leadership

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.





The Problem

- High postpartum depression rates among minority mothers in New Brunswick.
- Limited access to mental-health services, especially non-invasive therapies like music therapy.
- **High rates of obstetric emergencies at RWJ and Saint Peter's hospitals.**
- Structural racism and systemic barriers that worsen maternal health outcomes.
- Lack of culturally responsive postpartum support, especially bilingual resources.
- Medical trauma and emotional distress experienced during postpartum care.



Mission

To support minority postpartum mothers in New Brunswick by providing accessible, culturally responsive music-therapy resources that reduce stress, strengthen bonding, and address systemic gaps in maternal mental health care.

Project Overview



- Free postpartum music-therapy workshop for new mothers in New Brunswick.
- Held at Saint Peter's University Hospital with the New Moms' Support Group on **November 4th, 2025**.
- Created a culturally responsive, bilingual curriculum focused on singing, bonding, and self-soothing techniques with licensed music therapist Amy Clarkson.
- Filmed interviews with facilitators and hospital staff for recap video.
- Attendance: 50% turnout (8 mothers, 4 with babies), **above the typical rate** for postpartum support groups.

Free Resources Provided

- ✓ Postpartum health literacy packets
- ✓ Goodie bags + take-home music activity sheets with music class resources
- ✓ Spanish & English resource sheets



Project Timeline



Spring
2025

- Brainstormed ideas
- Secured advisors

Octo-
ber

- Finalized our workshop plan
- Ordered materials for workshop
- Met with our partners

Summer
2025

- Performed outreach + meetings
- Solidified our idea & workshop

Nov-
ember

- Cleaning up last-minute
- Placed catering order
- Scoped out location

Sept-
ember

- Started outlining our workshop
- Worked out the logistics (date, time, venue, participants, etc.)

Nov. 4,
2025!

**WORKSHOP
DAY!**



Products Created

Logo

Instagram account

Promotional flyer

Event film + newsletter feature



PRESENTED BY RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN
COLLABORATION WITH SAINT PETER'S
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Mamas and Melodies: Free Postpartum Music Therapy Workshop

Led by Amy Clarkson, MMT, LCAT, MT-BC, CP/PAT

- Free lunch and refreshments: mom and baby welcome!
- Socialize and meet new mothers
- See, listen, & learn how music therapy can become a part of your postpartum wellness plan
- Free gifts and giveaways
- Free postpartum resources & toolkits (English & Spanish)

Tuesday, November 4, 2025
12 p.m.
New Moms Support Group: Saint
Peter's University Hospital

Register your attendance!



www.saintpetershcs.com/Services/Parent-Education



Student Spotlight

Mamas and Melodies: Keya Thakkar DRC'27 and Sarah Farah DRC'26 Create Music Therapy Workshop for Postpartum Depression



mamasandmelodies

4 posts 26 followers 12 following

Mamas and Melodies: A Postpartum Music Therapy Workshop
Social Action Project for the Institute for Women's Leadership... more

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Partnerships Created

- Saint Peter's New Moms Support Group
- Creative Flow Therapy Services, LLC
- Douglass Residential College
- Douglass Faculty Fellows Program
- Scarlet Well Initiative
- Penn Medicine Princeton Health
- Rutgers University School of Communication and Information
- Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Women's Health Institute
- Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital



Intellectual & Conceptual Foundations

Maternal Health Disparities

- Minority mothers face higher maternal mortality and morbidity due to structural racism and socioeconomic barriers (Chinn et al. 2020).
- Saint Peter's & RWJ have higher-than-average obstetric emergency rates, mainly affecting uninsured & minority mothers (NJ Hospital Data 2025).

Music Therapy

- Music therapy significantly reduces maternal anxiety and improves fetal outcomes (Çatalgöl & Ceber Turfan 2021).
- Music therapy decreases both anxiety and depression in pregnant/puerperal patients (Chang et al. 2008).

Real Postpartum Experiences

- Attendance of the October 7th New Moms Support Group at Saint Peter's University Hospital allowed for us to hear and share new mothers' perspectives about birth and motherhood.
- Mothers shared their struggles with breastfeeding, mental health, and partner support.





Representing Feminist Leadership

CENTERS MARGINALIZED
MOTHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

PRIORITIZES EMPATHY, CARE,
AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

SHARES POWER THROUGH
COLLABORATION + LEADERSHIP

BUILDS COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS

MAMAS & MELODIES...

CREATES ACCESSIBLE, BILINGUAL,
INCLUSIVE RESOURCES

RESPONDS FLEXIBLY TO
COMMUNITY NEEDS

PROMOTES SELF-ADVOCACY AND
VOICE FOR MOTHERS

GROUNDS DECISIONS IN
RESEARCH + LIVED EXPERTISE



Lessons Learned

**LISTENING TO
OUR AUDIENCE,
THE MOTHERS,
SHAPED OUR
APPROACH**

**COMMUNITY
NEEDS ARE MORE
NUANCED THAN
RESEARCH
ALONE**

**COLLABORATION
STRENGTHENS
EVERY PART OF
THE PROJECT**

**FLEXIBILITY IS
ESSENTIAL IN
ADVOCACY
WORK**

**EMOTIONAL
SAFETY IS
FOUNDATIONAL
TO EFFECTIVE
PROGRAMMING**

**SMALL
INTERVENTIONS
CAN CREATE A
MEANINGFUL
IMPACT**



Impact & Evaluation

IMPACT

- Mothers reported feeling more supported and understood throughout the workshop.
- Participants expressed increased confidence in navigating postpartum care.
- Music therapy activities helped strengthen mother–infant bonding by providing simple, calming ways to connect.
- The workshop created a warm, community-centered environment where mothers felt welcomed, included, and safe to share.

EVALUATIONS

- Verbal feedback from mothers reflected strong satisfaction with the workshop structure, content, and emotional atmosphere.
- Participants were highly engaged, actively taking part in discussions, music activities, and reflection exercises.
- The take-home therapy kits encouraged ongoing learning and allowed mothers to practice music-based bonding at home.

Projected Impact & Future Implications



- This project establishes a replicable model for ongoing postpartum education that can be sustained and strengthened by future scholars.
- There is strong potential to expand the workshop into a multi-session series that provides mothers with a more meaningful and impactful music therapy experience.
- Future iterations can integrate formal surveys, evaluation tools, and outcome metrics to more quantitatively measure mothers' needs and the workshop's effectiveness.
- Leadership Scholars who continue this work can deepen partnerships with hospital staff, community organizations, and maternal-health advocates to broaden outreach and engagement.
- The long-term vision is to establish a standing postpartum support program that becomes a consistent and trusted resource for mothers in New Brunswick.



MAMAS & MELODIES

in action!





Acknowledgements

- **IWL Team**
 - **Sasha Taner, Samantha Agtarap**
 - **Amy Higer, Karla Jackson-Brewer**
 - **Saint Peter's University Hospital – New Moms Support Group**
 - **Bernadette Flynn-Kelton, RN**
 - **Kristal Neal**
 - **Amy Clarkson - Creative Flow Therapy Services, LLC**
 - **Douglass Residential College**
 - **Leslie Danehy**
 - **Katy Gray**
 - **School of Communication & Information (SC&I)**
 - **Louisa Paziienza-McMillan**
 - **Jalen Davey**
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THANK YOU!

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