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**MOTHERS & SHAKERS**  
AWARDS 2000



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# MOTHERS & SH



1. Naomi Judd

2. Amber Stime-Kassa

3. Susan Sarandon

4. Erin Brockovich Ellis

5. Judi Clark

What does it take to change the world? Courage, commitment, passion—and an unshakable belief that change is possible. Here, 10 women you'll never forget: the Mothers & Shakers 2000 award winners

BY LISA COHEN LEE AND KIMBERLY GOAD

DRUGS. POLLUTION. INJUSTICE. POVERTY. GUNS. We're bombarded with news stories about the latest threats to our lives and the lives of our children. Can one person really make a difference? Yes! These ten women—winners of our second annual Mothers & Shakers Awards—have all found ways to make the world a better, safer place for kids. Here's what they've done—and how you can get involved.

## 1 ★ NAOMI JUDD ★

Naomi Judd was dying and didn't know it. She and daughter Wynonna—better known as the Judds—were midway through a 1989 concert tour when Naomi first noticed the symptoms: depression, chronic headache, low-grade fever, extreme fatigue. She had hepatitis C, a life-threatening illness that affects some four million Americans. By the time she retired in 1991, doctors gave her three years to live. Yet Judd saw her diagnosis as an opportunity. "Catastrophe holds the potential for growth," Judd, now 54, has said. To that end, she established the Naomi Judd Education & Research Fund to find a cure for hepatitis C; she also established the Naomi Judd Liver Scholar Award for the study of pediatric liver disease.

Now in her third year of remission, Judd is spreading the word about prevention and treatment as national spokesperson for the American Liver Foundation. "I got this killer-diller disease and had to lose my career," she's said. "But it's not what happens to you in your life; it's what you do with it."

For more information on the Naomi Judd Education & Research Fund, call 800-223-0179.



# MAKERS 2000



Kristie Brinkley



7. Hannah Oakman



8. Jasmine Guy



9. Donna Dees-Thomas



10. Lisa Belzberg

## 2 ★AMBER STIME-KASSA★

At age 2½, Amber Stime-Kassa was playing a game of toss with a group of kids in her native Ethiopia when she caught what everyone believed was a pumice stone. It was a grenade. The bomb exploded; Stime-Kassa lost both hands. Her parents placed her in an orphanage so she would have better access to medical care. Six years later, Amber was adopted by a couple from Minnesota.

"What happened to me was nothing compared to what some of the other kids in the orphanage went through," says Stime-Kassa, now a 39-year-old social worker and mother of three. "I always knew I would return to Ethiopia one day, but I didn't want to just visit. I wanted to help." When she finally returned, Stime-Kassa found some of the same people, now adults, still living in the orphanage—including a former roommate with polio. "To see her grown up," Stime-Kassa says, "and to see myself grown up with the opportunities I've had, it makes you wonder, Why?"

The experience inspired Stime-Kassa to launch African Cradle, a private nonprofit agency that works with the Ethiopian government to find children adoptive families in the U.S.; 150 kids have been placed here since the agency's inception in 1992.

One of the great rewards of her work is watching once-neglected children not only survive but thrive. "That's when you see the miracle of life," she says.

For more information on African Cradle, call 209-575-1980, or visit [www.africancradle.com](http://www.africancradle.com).

## 3 ★SUSAN SARANDON★

Susan Sarandon is no celebrity-activist-come-lately. She's been speaking out on issues ever since she protested the Vietnam War as a college student. Now 54, the actress admits her celebrity makes speaking out easier. "When I have an opportunity to pass on information, I do," she says. "That's how we bring about change."

Sarandon has traveled to Tanzania for UNICEF to educate women on prenatal care, nutrition, and AIDS; she's supported the Heifer Project International, which teaches malnourished families how to grow food; she's traveled to Nicaragua as a member of MADRE, a human rights organization that supports families in conflict zones. "These groups are all different, but the victims suffer from the same injustices," says Sarandon. "By putting problems out in the open, we can help empower those who are suffering."

Sarandon is especially concerned about increasing people's awareness of domestic violence. Breaking the silence on this issue is key, she believes, which is why she speaks out at every opportunity—whether it's to a friend's daughter who has been abused by a boyfriend or to a larger audience through a documentary or public-service announcement. "Abuse has no perimeters," she says. "Seeing what I've seen makes you want to help any way you can."

For more information, contact UNICEF (212-326-7000; [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)), Heifer Project International (800-422-0474; [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)), or MADRE (212-627-0444; [www.madre.org](http://www.madre.org)).  
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# Even if our families are safe, healthy, and empower of people who aren't. Can one woman really ma

**4 ★ERIN BROCKOVICH ELLIS★**  
Before *Erin Brockovich* the Julia Roberts movie, there was Erin Brockovich the real woman—the plucky file clerk who took on the bad guys and won. In 1992, the twice-divorced single mom went to work at a law firm where she happened across medical records misplaced in a real-estate file. As she investigated, she found a cover-up involving a group of families in the small town of Hinkley, CA, who had been poisoned by chromium in their drinking water. The evidence was later used in a landmark case against Pacific Gas & Electric, which was found guilty of dumping dangerous chemicals into the town's water system. PG&E settled with the plaintiffs for \$333 million, the largest settlement ever paid in a direct-action lawsuit.

Since the release of the film earlier this year, Brockovich Ellis has gotten a taste of fame, for better and for worse. But she has also discovered the power of her story to inspire others. "The people I met in Hinkley made such an impact on my life," says Brockovich Ellis, now 40. "Now I'm doing what I can to bring action against other corporations who are covering up environmental waste without regard to the families who live near the dumping sites."

For more information, call 818-991-8900, or e-mail [brockovich@toxicatty.com](mailto:brockovich@toxicatty.com).

**5 ★JUDI CLARK★**  
In the early morning hours of January 17, 1999, Judi Clark was awakened by a phone call that changed her life forever. Her 15-year-old daughter, Samantha, had suffered a drug overdose and the voice on the line was urging Clark to get to the hospital. In what was later described as an effort to liven up a night of video watching, a couple of boys from Samantha's high school had slipped a drug, gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), into her Mountain Dew. When she fell unconscious, the boys left her on the bathroom floor, thinking she would sleep it off. It was only after she began gagging on her own vomit that they panicked and took her to the hospital. Samantha, who had fallen into a coma, died later that afternoon.

As she mourned her daughter, Clark, 38, turned Samantha's death into a crusade for limits on GHB, more commonly known as the date-rape drug. She took six months off from her job as a pipe fitter in Rockwood, MI, a small town outside Detroit, to study the drug.

A person who sips a drink laced with GHB can lose consciousness within 20 minutes; when—or if—she awakens, she may have no recollection of what happened. At the time of Samantha's death, the drug—which has been linked to at least 58 deaths and more than 5,700 overdoses nationwide since 1990—was commonly sold on the Internet as a natural body-building supplement. "How is it," wondered Clark, "that kids can't buy cigarettes but they can buy this drug?"

With the help of relatives and friends, Clark established the Samantha Reid Foundation to help spread the word about GHB.

She wrote her congressman asking that the Controlled Substances Act be amended to include GHB; last February, Congress classified it as a Schedule 1 drug (others are heroin and LSD), making illegal possession punishable by up to 20 years in prison.

For Clark, who watched her daughter's killers get off with lighter sentences, the news was bittersweet. "I traded my daughter for that bill," she says. "But the next guys who do this won't get off so easy. That comforts me."

For more information on the Samantha Reid Foundation, write to P.O. Box 119, Rockwood, MI 48173, or visit [www.gbbkills.com](http://www.gbbkills.com).

**6 ★CHRISTIE BRINKLEY★**  
Nearly 42 million Americans live near a nuclear power plant. Told this statistic at a dinner party three years ago, Christie Brinkley was even more astonished to learn that she and her family were among them, and that the two major nuclear power plants on the eastern tip of Long Island exposed her family to low levels of potentially cancer-causing radiation.

"My first reaction was, 'We've got to get out of here,'" says the former supermodel, now 46 and a mother of three. "But as I learned more, I realized that unless we pack up and move to the woods of South Dakota, we can't avoid it."

Instead, she's fighting. By the end of dinner that night, Brinkley and her husband, architect Peter Cook, had become board members of a fledgling nonprofit foundation, STAR (Standing for Truth About Radiation). The group, founded by pediatrician and antinuclear activist Helen Caldicott, M.D., had been successful in alerting residents about nuclear pollution, but unsuccessful in its larger goal of shutting down out-of-date nuclear power plants.

Last year, armed with surveys and petitions, Brinkley and Cook persuaded Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson to scuttle the reopening of the Brookhaven reactor on Long Island. "I've put my heart and soul into this," says Brinkley, "because I have to stand up for the place I love and the children who live in it."

For more information on the STAR Foundation, call 631-324-0655, or visit [www.noradiation.org](http://www.noradiation.org).

**7 ★HANNAH OAKMAN★**  
"Those of us who are successful didn't become that way by ourselves," says Hannah Oakman, founder of Personal Empowerment Now (PEN), a Philadelphia-based organization that matches welfare moms with mentors.

In 1982, Oakman was a welfare mom herself, living with four kids in a one-room apartment in the Philadelphia slums when her divorce lawyer asked her a simple question: Why hadn't she gone to college? "I had never thought of it because I'd always been a terrible student," says Oakman, now 46 and the mother of seven. "But a friend persuaded me to apply to Philadelphia Community College. I was accepted on scholarship, and that was the beginning of a new life."