

Healing and Advocacy
What we can do..
(More Information Online)

- * **Wear Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Pin and/or Bracelet:** educate others about the numbers of babies that die and the work of MODs and SHARE Atlanta. Consider sharing your story to help them understand how special your child is to you. Pins are offered at our events and meetings.
- * **“Walk to Remember” - Walk for March of Dimes in April:** walk in memory of your baby to help MODs. SA has been #1 Downtown Family Team since 2005. We have placed Nationally 5 times. The most cherished reward would be to prevent losses so SA would no longer be needed.
- * **Name Memorial brick:** include your baby’s name, dates or a verse on a memorial brick in our Angel Garden. Order form online.
- * **Outreach for Healing in memory of our babies: ie. March of Dimes - “Walk to Remember.” Foster Care Shelter~** donate a toy or clothing for a needy child. **5B’s Outreach~** make a blanket or item of clothing for a special baby in the hospital. **Memorial Tree~** donate an ornament. Our tree is given to a hospital or charity.
- * **Promote our efforts to lessen deaths and to reach bereaved parents:** give SHARE Atlanta’s and MOD’s information and website to your caregivers, church, friends, and/or family. Help with SA inservices.
- * **Attend Memorial Service and Candle-lighting:** share you memories and support for healing. If you have experienced some resolution around your loss, come support those who are beginning to work through their grief.



- * **Be Active with SHARE Atlanta:** volunteer with or attend our meetings and/or events. *Together we move through the journey of grieving, healing, and making subsequent choices.*

Many volunteer to honor the memory of all the precious children whose brief presence touched our hearts forever.



Every loss is the loss of the dream of a living child.

SHARE Atlanta is:

- for families who have experienced ectopic, miscarriage, stillbirth and newborn loss
- a non-profit organization since 1984
- staffed and led by parent volunteers
- funded completely by tax deductible donations
- non-denominational; no fees

SHARE Atlanta (SA) provides:

- Angel Garden and Memorial Brick Pathway, Arlington Memorial Park, Sandy Springs, GA
 - Grief-Support Brochures & Booklets
 - “Parent Packet” & “Survival Kit”
 - Support Group Meetings
 - Outreach for Healing Programs
 - www.shareatlanta.org– GA’s CBRS, forums; Facebook, memorial pages; information & links about: SA programs, advocacy, medical & grief support.
 - Memorial & Candlelighting Programs
 - In-service Programs
 - Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group
- Information Line: 770-928-9603**

SHARE Atlanta (SA)

Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Grief Support
 Since 1984
www.shareatlanta.org

October is Loss Awareness Month
Advocacy for Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Issues



A guide for understanding the issues so healing is supported and losses can be lessened.



Why Have a Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month?

- * Because life, even the tiniest life, is special.
- * Because life, even the tiniest life, must be remembered.
- * Because parents want to remember.
- * Because grieving parents need sensitive doctors, nurses, clergy, funeral directors and families.
- * Because the larger community needs to be reminded that pregnancy and infant losses occur often.
- * Because the larger community needs to know how to help grieving families.
- * Because the larger community needs to be reminded that life, even the tiniest life, is special.

“A supportive environment can make all the difference in how parents incorporate their loss, their precious child, into their lives in a healthy manner.”
 The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Center's Loving Arms newsletter, Fall '84 and 8/9/91



Healing & Hope

Permission to Grieve and Options

Every bereaved parent should be given *permission to grieve* and given possible *options* for healing. If and when they choose to grieve, and what they choose to do is *their decision*.

In a group, parents who have experienced similar losses support one another. We know that not everyone will ask for support. For many, the realization that they are not alone provides comfort.

Death is not understood by society.

Reactions are usually driven by misunderstanding, denial, and fear of the unknown. Society questions is it “right” to grieve a person that *no one knew or how long grief should last*. Parents feel as though they did know this little one. Parents often fear what others will think or that recognition of their loss will make them hurt more.

Awareness Activities

Activities lessen the misconceptions so parents may own their true feelings and reactions. Hopefully, they can feel safe to ask for the support they need to move through the grieving process.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss cause Grief.

This type of death occurs more often than society realizes. Many of these deaths are no longer mysteries because of the connections made from groups such as SA, the March of Dimes (MOD), CDC, NIH, SIDS, research and medical professionals. There is *advocacy* for intervention and prevention of the *difficult pregnancy*.

A “voice” as we support one another

Parents have a *voice* with groups such as SA and MODs. Our issues, both emotional and physical, are important. By facing them, more babies will live, and fewer parents will suffer alone. *Hope, not pain and confusion, will be the lasting memory as healing occurs.* Marcia McGinnis

History of the Month

⇒ Proclaimed by President Reagan in 1988

⇒ It took *six years* of educating politicians and society to make this happen.

⇒ *Why?* Pregnancy and Infant Loss is not a topic that is easily understood. Birth and death should not happen at the same time. When it does, there is denial about the significance of the death because of the short time of the presence of the life. In this denial, parents are asked to “move on” before they have had time to heal.

⇒ *Why?* Many doctors as well as society in general find it very difficult to fully comprehend the *number* of babies that die and the *resulting heartbreak that families endure*.

⇒ *What?* We have to focus on grieving, healing, and continuing our life in a meaningful manner to honor our baby’s memory. Being *aware of the issues* and *advocacy* of these issues can be an important part of healing. *Advocacy is necessary for prevention to decrease the number of deaths as well as for understanding the importance of emotional support for gradual healing.*

Some Statistics

⇒ 28,000 *stillbirths* occur per year.

⇒ An estimated *1 in 4 pregnancies ends in miscarriage* - the MODs state *50% of pregnancies* end in miscarriage.

⇒ *19,000 newborns* die during the first month.

⇒ *460,000 babies* in the U.S. are *born too soon* every year, some so small they fight to survive.

⇒ Death happens...parents grieve. *Advocacy is needed and important..*

(Statistics derived from a combination of MOD’s statistical information and a study by Allen Wilcox, MD, New England Journal of Medicine, 7/28/’98)

The Pregnancy and Newborn Loss

Community’s Ongoing Issues

Marcia McGinnis

⇒ **Support from society:** Families who suffer this tragedy need sensitive caregivers, understanding friends, supportive families, and the opportunity to attend grief support groups in order to heal.

⇒ **Prevention:** We need to *work to prevent pregnancy and newborn loss*. The MODs has picked up the banner in providing medical support for conditions such as toxemia, placenta previa, neural tube defects with folic acid, etc. which cause difficult pregnancies and babies to die or to be born with health problems. As the MODs works with other groups such as the CDC and dedicated medical professionals, they will ultimately limit the number of parents who will need SHARE Atlanta’s support.

⇒ **Advocacy:** Parents *must continue advocacy both for emotional health and for prevention and possible intervention during pregnancy*. Awareness, about perinatal health care and the *right* of a woman who fears that she might be experiencing a problem *to seek out medical care*, must be a primary issue for mothers-to-be. Babies of difficult pregnancies (at any stage of pregnancy) need to be protected so they will not die.

⇒ **Mutual-support:** At every gathering, we remember our own baby and other parents’ children. We are there to support grieving parents- no matter how long ago their loss was or how early a loss they experienced. We also show collective appreciation for *continuing awareness* so others might not suffer similar losses and parents will feel comfortable in seeking emotional support.

