

SHARE Atlanta's Mission:

- To provide a support system for bereaved parents who have suffered a pregnancy or newborn loss. Our primary focus will be on parental issues so healing can gradually occur. We will include an outreach program for parents, their family, friends, and caregivers.
- To make sure that bereaved parents, in their quest for healing, are *offered* the *options* we provide.

Parents should not have to *hunt* for our group. It is painful to want support and not know where or how to get it. We understand that not every bereaved parent will use our program, but by offering our information to each parent, s/he can decide when and if to join us.

Typical Goals Achieved by SHARE Atlanta Volunteers

1. Angel and memorial brick garden
2. Memorial Quilt, Memorial Services
3. Website, form, & newsletter for broader outreach
4. PR campaigns: CNN, radio, CBS, newspapers..
5. In-service: most Atlanta hospitals, nursing and midwife groups, churches, woman's groups, etc.
6. Concise brochures to increase understanding
7. "In-house" written booklets for supporting grief education, coping ideas, and holiday support.
8. Guest speakers: future pregnancy, men's grief...

Goals for the Parent & Their Support System

For the parent to realize that Grief:

- is a normal process - "It's okay to grieve."
- takes time and patience - "Move at your own pace."
- causes change - "New choices help us to heal."

For the parent to realize that Grief Work can lead to:

- new coping skills and choices
- new understanding of self, marriage and significant relationships
- hope, growth, and *healing*

We always remember: "Our babies are special and so are we. Our babies will be.." *Forever in our Hearts*"

Julie, one of our members wrote to us: "I believe everyone here (at the group) would have made it. The real question is-who would we be *now* if we didn't have SHARE Atlanta. I know for a fact that I would be a very different person, and I'm glad I'm where I am and not in that other place."

General Requirements:

- SHARE group member or Friend of SHARE
- Knowledge of mission statement and goals
- Knowledge of SHARE 's history and present status
- Knowledge of grief and its symptoms
- Strong desire to keep SHARE traditions alive
- Ability to motivate and to work well with others
- Organizational skills—for some jobs
- Available to attend 2-3 business meetings (*Business meetings are open to all, new ideas and support keep SHARE Atlanta current.*)
- Keep President updated on issues

Work Environment:

- Member's home or local meeting location
- A few jobs require access to print shop, hospitals, and other locations in order to fulfill requirements

Goals of a volunteer:

- To fulfill volunteer position in such a matter that the overall goals and mission statement for SHARE Atlanta are met.
- To stay in contact with the coordinator of the group or committee that volunteer represents
- To maintain a friendly, non-judgmental, and supportive attitude, both with other volunteers and those who volunteer seeks to support or provide outreach. Volunteers always will remember why they are volunteering and that ALL volunteers are doing their best.
- Being respectful of each other and of the Pregnancy and Newborn Loss community that volunteer represents.

Length of Commitment:

General Volunteer:

- One year from January to January
- One year from time of commitment to the January closes to "one year" timeframe

Board Member & Group Facilitator: two years with same format as above

SHARE Atlanta, Inc
Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Grief Support
Since 1984

Volunteering with SHARE Atlanta

*A guide to better understand the
Pregnancy and Newborn Loss
Community and how **volunteers**
continue SHARE Atlanta's outreach*



Information-Messages
(770) 928-9603
www.shareatlanta.org

A volunteer, parent-led organization
Non-profit-mutual support group
Non-denominational No fees

*Many of us volunteer to honor the
memory of all the precious children
whose short lives touched the hearts
and lives of their parents and
friends.*



SHARE Atlanta is...

Working through our grief
with each other;
Sharing our fears and feelings;
Knowing we are not alone in our pain...
Finding hope from those who have made
it through their grief to the other side;
Very special people
Pam Slayback, Volunteer
SHARE Atlanta, '86

Did you feel alone?

After a pregnancy or newborn loss parents feel as all bereaved feel—confused and isolated. Often they are told that “their kind of loss” is unique and the chances of it happening again are slim. Or they are told that they will have to seek genetic counseling before getting pregnant again. Whatever the circumstances, the parents still feel hand picked for a disaster that they have rarely heard of and don’t understand. This usually comes at a time when all of their friends are having living babies and growing families. Tied with societies spoken message to move –on after a brief, if any, mourning period, parents are often shocked when they come to a SHARE Atlanta meeting and see others—like themselves! Everyone shares a similar story and *all* feel alone and isolated in their plight.

The Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Community (PNLC)

After 25 years of groups for healing parents’ emotional health and the gathering of statistics and death details, a Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Community has been identified. Groups such as SHARE, HAND, etc., largely composed of concerned bereaved parents and nurses, have heightened the emphasis on the emotional and medical issues that have been exposed and discussed within their groups. Today, doctors and teaching hospitals (Wisconsin Stillbirth Program, Dr. Collins) are focusing on some of the major causes of loss, and medically oriented support groups have formed (Group B Strep (GBS) Ass., The Association of Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia Research, Advocacy, and Support,) The March of Dimes is a leading advocate for pregnancy care to prevent birth defects and pregnancy loss. We are no longer an unidentified entity. *We have support in our quest for answers to our losses and in our emotional issues.*

Some statistics:

- ...900,000 - total pregnancy losses each year
- ...more than 1/2 million end in miscarriage. (An estimated 1 in 4 pregnancies ends in miscarriage - some doctors associated with March of Dimes state 50% of pregnancies end in miscarriage.)
- ...26,000 end in stillbirth
- ...19,000 end in infant death during the first month
- ...39,000 end in infant death during the 1st year
- ...1,000s more wanted pregnancies are interrupted after problems are detected
- ...460,000 babies in the U.S. are born too soon every year, some so small they must fight to survive.

These estimates are based on statistics derived from a combination of March of Dimes statistical information and a study done by Allen Wilcox, MD, New England Journal of Medicine, July 28, 1998.

What does a *community* aligned with statistics mean for the bereaved, their family and friends?

It means that others have experienced a similar kind of loss, survived and, in various ways, are supporting the issues and the people who will come to identify with the community. This is being accomplished by increasing the resources, materials, support facilities, and medical awareness for those who are a part of the PNLC.

Within a community we are *not alone*.

Today, we are more clearly recognized as a community with defined issues and concerns, and we are no longer struggling for each breathe. While a community has been defined, our actual “working numbers” are still small. Those individuals who are a part of the PNLC because of a loss should consider what measure they can lend to the PNLC in order to continue this growth in a positive direction.

"Thank you for all of your support! I couldn't have done it without SHARE Atlanta!"
-Lauren Weisman, announcing the birth of her daughter

Volunteers, healed and healing bereaved parents, are part of the PNLC.

Our community is unique in that most of those who loose their baby usually go on to have living children and a growing family. This is a blessed fact to those who have struggled to cope with their loss. We understand that a parents’ energies should be directed into providing for the family. We also appreciate that revisiting - for *any* reason - a very painful place in your life is difficult. But, please remember how you felt as you learned of your loss baby, sort support and then first understood that you were *not alone*. Most importantly, remember how you felt when you realized that you had survived this experience and a level of peace was returning. You finally knew that you could start to plan your subsequent baby or to make new choices for your life.

Volunteering with SHARE Atlanta

SHARE Atlanta asks for one or two year’s time commitment for most positions. Though there are some shorter term projects. We do understand that family needs may make it impossible to fulfill a term, and we will find a replacement. As far as emotional input, many of the positions do not require any or limited parent interaction. Please consider opening yourself to providing for others so that they, too, may find what healing means—within a parent-led support group.

No one needs to feel alone.

Our special babies would ask us to make their life meaningful. There are many ways to do this. One way would be to support the PNLC in some way. Please consider helping so fewer bereaved parents will feel alone.

SHARE Atlanta Information: Volunteers:
Many parents have volunteered through the years. Some have stayed for less than a year while others stay for more than five or ten. Everyone has helped us give the gift of support to those who come to our doors. We thank each one of these people for their personal outreach to the Pregnancy and Newborn Loss Community.
<http://www.shareatlanta.org/sahistorymenu.htm>