

Caring and Coping



Holiday Edition 2022

Picnic in the Park: 2022 Atlanta Walk to Remember

After two years of hosting virtual Walks to Remember, we were able to come together again in person for this year's event. Approximately 700 people joined us for our 18th annual Atlanta Walk to Remember on October 16th. This year's theme was "Picnic in the Park" and included food trucks and time for attendees to join together before the program to have lunch together and spend time with others in our community. Families were able to paint keepsake rocks, in the spirit of The Kindness Rocks Project. Many thanks to our partners, Metro Music Therapy, who provided a fun "musical zoo" for our youngest attendees and to Kendra Scott Gives Back for providing an avenue for families to order keepsake jewelry to support future walks.

Our program began with a dove release and an inspirational message from Tom & Crystal Chiang, who lost their daughter Everly in 2021.

After a reading of the names, we ended with the release of butterflies and our walk. It was a wonderful day with beautiful weather and beautiful community.

Many thanks to our sponsors, who made this event possible. Special thanks to Joy Cannis with Joy Cannis Photography for being a part of our day and donating her time and talent to provide pictures from the event. Please visit the Atlanta Walk to Remember Facebook page, as well as our website to view the event photography.

"*You have a place in my heart no one else could ever have*"

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

Whatever our dreams and whatever our woes, we will always remember the babies that go before us. Just as Fitzgerald explored university themes of time and fate in his writings, we come together annually to remember our babies.



For Your Calendar

Caring & Coping Support Group

Meetings are virtual and registration is required. Please check our website for updates in the event a meeting date is changed.

- December 12, 2022
- January 9, 2023
- February 13, 2023
- March 13, 2023
- April 10, 2023

Northside Hospital H.E.A.R.T.strings Memorial Service. For information, call 404-851-8754.

Hospital Tours

Special "Re-Entry" Tours Available by Appointment. If it would help to have H.E.A.R.T.strings guide you, we would be honored to do so. We can do as much or as little as you desire – you set the parameters. Contact us to set up a time.

You've Got Mail

Send us your email address! We communicate upcoming events and announcements. We will NOT share this information publicly. You may "opt out" at any time. Email us at northsidepnl@gmail.com to be added to the list.

Newsletter Submissions

We welcome your participation! If this section of the newsletter caught your attention, it is not a mistake. Let us know and we will even reach out to you to talk about your story or just what is tugging at the strings of your heart. You can also directly email us your submission.

Contact Us

Atlanta: 404-851-8177

Cherokee: 770-224-1817

Forsyth: 770-292-2552

Gwinnett: 678-312-4786

Email: northsidepnl@gmail.com

Website: nouthsidepnl.com

Address: 1000 Johnson Ferry Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30342

Picnic in the Park cont.

"Tom & Crystal Chiang gave such a moving message at this year's Atlanta Walk to Remember. Several people in attendance requested a copy of it, so we decided to include it here. Thank you so much, Tom & Crystal.

"What I love about events like this one is the "get it" factor. There is just something about being around people who get it. There is something about spending time with people who "get" what it means to hurt in ways most humans never have to, to keep going when we can barely survive or to hear someone complaining about their child and silently imagine poking them in the eye because they have no idea how lucky they are. Mostly, I love that the people here get what it means to love your child so much that you choose to parent them, even if that means parenting from a distance by lighting candles, releasing doves and showing up to events like this one. In Everly's last moment, as she transitioned to her forever, we were able to hold her. I know that's not the case for everyone here, and I don't take lightly what privilege it is to have that memory. But in those last few moments, we expected a tsunami of grief. And we got one. But what neither of us expected was the wave of joy that came with it. We only got to hold her for 30 minutes, but there was a lifetime of love and joy in that 30 minutes. No one tells you that the best moment of your life and the worst moment of your life might happen at the same time. The grief of losing a child and joy of becoming a parent can both have the volume turned all the way up. Like so many of you, the last year has been a weird mix of grief and joy—Some of you have felt the grief of a pregnancy that ended but there was still joy. The pregnancy was possible. Maybe you felt the grief of a baby born sleeping mixed with the joy of seeing the precious baby who had been awake in your belly. For all of us, there is grief and joy. Even today's event is a mixture of both. I used to think holding grief and joy at the same time was impossible. After all, they seem like opposites... But they're not, they are side effects of love. And the love we have for babies is big enough to contain them both. One of the most surprising things for us is how many parents have come out of the woodwork saying I get it. Around that time, another parent who had lost a baby came to talk with us and gave us a picture that was incredibly helpful. He said this experience would feel a lot like being shipwrecked- that some days the waves would be high and we were just trying to come up for air. Other days we would find a piece of the wreckage, a memory, an idea, that we would hang onto for dear life. That picture proved incredibly true for us. And if you're here today, and you are new to that shipwreck, and you feel like you're drowning, I want you to know it won't always be like this. You may never go back to the way things were, but there will be calmer waters ahead. And there are days where the waves of grief will not be quite so high. And if you are here because you love someone who has experienced the shipwreck, I want you to know that you are a life raft. That even if you feel like you don't know what to say, or you don't know what to do, you are a place of safety just by floating around. And if, sometime down the road, you find yourself in calmer waters, when the waves of grief are not so high and joy is keeping you afloat--- and I hope you begin to look for others who are shipwrecked. The sad truth is next year this event will be full of people who are not us. People who are new to this life and who need someone to tell them that they are going to make it. That eventually the waves will not be as high as they are today. Maybe you will be that person by showing up here next year. Maybe between now and then, you will show up to your support group or donate to the Reagan Marie Teddy Bear Fund. Maybe I'll buy a T-shirt today so this event keeps happening or maybe you will just keep your eyes open for other families who might be going through something hard and choose to walk toward them instead of away from them. And doing so, you are not only honoring those families but you were honoring our sweet babies and continuing to be the proud parents who: share their story, say their name, hold them with grief and joy at the same time."



Handling the Holidays Without Your Baby

"It is impossible for you to go on as you were before, so you must go on as you never have."

– Cheryl Strayed

The holiday season is a time when the whole world is celebrating and gathering together. However, it can be one of the most painful reminders of what you have lost. As you come to the end of a year, you are called to be reflective, but it may be hard to look back. When everyone is feverishly making gratitude lists, you may ask, "How can I be grateful when there is an overwhelming feeling that all is lost?" We hope you can find solace in the fact that you are not alone. You are part of a community where compassion and understanding are found.

Navigating through the holidays can be very tough, especially if this is your first holiday season without your baby or if your due date was to be around the holidays. Here a few helpful tips:

- *Don't expect too much. In other words, take it easy on yourself. You have been through a devastating event and you deserve your time to be sad.*
- *Remember...the thought and anticipation of the holiday is so much worse than the actual day itself.*
- *Consider donating a gift or money in memory of your precious baby.*
- *Create one new tradition in memory of your baby.*
- *Hang a stocking for your baby on your mantle and fill it with messages to him/ her. Spend time as a couple or a family remembering your baby and sharing the messages together. Your baby is very much a part of your family and it is OK to make them a part of your day.*
- *Give family the opportunity to participate in remembering your baby: Have a special box on a table, with a stack of little note cards or paper next to it and encourage guests to write a note to your baby and put it in the box.*
- *Spend some time remembering your baby by looking at pictures or keepsakes, if you have them.*
- *If you have a Christmas tree, have a special ornament made in memory of your baby. Here's an idea: insert one of your baby's photographs, if you have one, or a bracelet with the name, into a plain glass ball ornament. Then tie a pretty ribbon around the top.*
- *Don't feel like you have to overdo it! Be with the people that make YOU happy. Remember that this will be a difficult time for you, so surround yourself with the people who will support you and make you feel good.*
- *Know that it is OK to express your feelings. If you feel like crying, do not bottle it in. Those around you should understand and allow you time to cry. If not, do not include them in your holiday.*
- *Consider taking a trip and doing something a little different this year. If this is your first holiday after your loss, then you have had a different year anyway, so maybe a trip will be just what you need.*

Blessings to all of you during this difficult season.

Newsletter Content Change

We are going digital! This issue of C&C is our last print edition of the newsletter. We are still publishing three newsletters each year and we want you to be able to receive them. Take a moment and visit our mailing list page to sign up to be on the list. If you already receive emails from us, you should be on the email listserv. If you are not sure if you are on the list, go ahead and submit a response and we can make sure we have your most up-to-date information.

To visit our mailing list page, go to: <https://www.northsidepnl.com/mailing-list.html> or scan the QR code below.



Walk to Remember Highlight: Dove Release

We have integrated the release of doves for many years as part of the annual Atlanta Walk to Remember events. During this year's event, we shared about the symbolism of doves, "The first dove is released to symbolize the grief and anxiety we have felt during this pandemic and the hope to come. The 2nd dove reminds us to remember the babies lost each year to pregnancy and infant loss. Finally, the 3rd dove symbolizes the love of a family as they gather to remember and walk together. The first 3 doves aren't alone, though, as they journey home. They have a family to travel with. Just as our perinatal loss community is traveling together, so are they." Nancy Kay Duncan is the owner of Georgia Doves, the group that has provided doves for our releases. When asked about her experience with this over many years, here is what she shared.

"The releasing of doves raises our eyes up and fills our hearts with love, joy, hope, peace and remembrance as symbolized by the white dove. Doves have been honored and adored for centuries as they still are today. Offering the doves for release the past 20 years has been a highlight in my life. After retiring from a career in dental hygiene, day-to-day duties of caring for the doves and seeing the result of the impact on the smiling faces looking into the heavens makes a special moment of reward for me and everyone participating. Burdens are lifted and new hope begins. Hopefully, I will be able to continue to provide the doves and eventually pass the farm on to a passionate dove keeper such as I."



"Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove. Dance me to the end of love."

— Leonard Cohen

Welcome Tonya Lowry

Tonya Lowry joined H.E.A.R.T.strings when Gwinnett Medical Center and Northside Hospital merged. She has become a valuable member of the team and brings a wealth of experience, professionally and personally. Prior to joining the H.E.A.R.T.strings team, Tonya served as the Bereavement Coordinator at Gwinnett Women's Pavilion for 9+ years. Tonya is married to her high school sweetheart, Gibson, and they have four beautiful children. In November of 2008, their third child, Grady, was stillborn two days before her scheduled c-section. As a result, Tonya's eyes and heart were opened to bereaved parents and families enduring the painful and life-changing loss of a child. God laid it on her heart to walk alongside the broken-hearted, in an effort to offer support, encouragement and hope amidst their sorrow. Tonya feels that it is an honor and blessing to be a part of this sacred time with these parents and their precious babies.

"Rainbows remind us that even after the darkest clouds, and the fiercest winds, there is still beauty."

– Katrina Mayer



Tonya, on the left, is pictured here with husband and children.

Pregnancy After Loss Parent Survey

In our last newsletter, we asked for readers to participate in a Pregnancy After Loss Parent Survey. Our goal in asking these questions and sharing responses is to help those experiencing pregnancy after a loss to know that there are many others out there that are going through some of the very same parts of the journey.

- Q: How long was it between your loss and the next pregnancy?

A: I got pregnant exactly 4 months after my loss.

- Q: Describe how you felt when you had a positive pregnancy test for the pregnancy after the loss.

A: I was definitely excited, but I also didn't believe it was true for the first few weeks. I think maybe I was subconsciously trying to protect myself from the opportunity of losing another baby.

- Q: How did other people respond to the next pregnancy?

A: Our family was absolutely thrilled, however I had a really hard time with some other people's responses to my next pregnancy since it was so soon after my loss. I wanted my friends to be excited and happy for me, but I had some friends that did not seem excited. They wouldn't ask me how I was feeling or updates on the pregnancy like I had hoped. One friend admitted later that she was worried that I got pregnant so soon after my loss so that was why she didn't seem excited. Due to that, I did not post anything about my pregnancy on social media. I realize now that other people's opinions shouldn't matter. I knew deep in my heart that I was meant to be a mom, and after praying for another baby, God blessed me in His perfect timing.

Pregnancy After Loss Parent Survey cont.

- Q: What helped you during the pregnancy after loss (with anxiety, fear, emotions, and sadness)?

A: I prayed for peace A LOT, and read the Bible a bunch. I truly believe that Jesus took away my fears that I had in the 1st trimester. I enjoyed every minute of the pregnancy for the 2nd and 3rd trimester. I realized that God was in control, and all my babies belong to him, so no matter what happens, he will make sure they are cared for (whether it ended up being me taking care of her on Earth, or Jesus taking care of her in Heaven like my son).

- Q: What kinds of feelings or expectations did you have regarding the delivery of the baby after loss (because of your loss)?

A: I definitely had fear in the beginning of the pregnancy that I would go into preterm labor again, however after I had the cerclage surgery to stitch my cervix, I had a total sense of peace and no longer feared preterm labor. Once I made it to 39 weeks, I scheduled a c-section since the baby was breech. Surprisingly, I was so excited to meet my baby that I didn't fear the surgery at all!

- Q: During your pregnancy after the loss, what kinds of planning and preparation did you do to get ready for the baby? Was it different than with the pregnancy that ended in loss?

A: I did all of the standard planning with my pregnancy after loss. I got the nursery all decorated and bought all the essentials. God gave me reassurance that everything was going to be ok so I just planned on bringing this baby home!

- Q: Did you have a feeling one way or the other regarding the gender of this baby?

A: Yes, my husband and I both had strong feelings that it was a girl. And we were right!

- Q: If you gave birth to your newest baby at the same hospital where you experienced your loss or where your baby died, how did it feel to be at the same hospital?

A: I did give birth at the same hospital that my son died at (he was in the NICU for 3 weeks and died there). The hardest times for me were in the very beginning of my pregnancy when I wasn't sure if the pregnancy was even real. I had an appointment at the same hospital the day that I was convinced I was miscarrying. I remember getting off the highway and seeing the hospital for the 1st time since my son's death. I cried so hard. However, when it came time for my c-section I was so excited to meet my daughter that I didn't have as hard of a time being at the same hospital. I am just so thankful that she didn't have to go to the NICU, because I don't think I can ever step foot on that floor again.

- Q: What are some ways you kept your baby's memory alive during your next pregnancy and after the birth of your new baby?

A: We talk about my son often, and keep pictures of him in the house. We celebrate his birthdays, visit his grave, and just talk about him as if he's still part of our family. Ever since my daughter was born, we have told her about her big brother that is in Heaven. We tell her that his body is all healed and he doesn't have any pain or sadness. We want to make sure that she knows about him and the joy he brought to our family during his short life on Earth, and how God is using his story for good.

- Q: If you could give one piece of advice to someone considering a pregnancy after loss, what would it be?

A: I would say GO FOR IT!! Don't listen to what anyone else says. Pray to God and read the Bible for the truth about how Jesus loves us and cares so much about his children. Every baby is a miracle from God and he has a special plan for every baby- whether they live for 90 minutes or 90 years on Earth.

Thank you, Holly, for sharing your answers
and your heart with others!



H.E.A.R.T.strings Support Group Resources

Our support groups provide a place where grieving parents can find comfort and companionship among others who understand. Our groups are open to the community, and free of charge. For information and schedules, and for other support resources including a list of recommended therapists, please visit: northsidepnl.com/supportgatherings. You may also email us at northsidepnl@gmail.com or call **404-851-8177**. ***Due to COVID-19 guidelines, our groups are all virtual until further notice.***

Caring & Coping This group is open to parents and grandparents who have lost a baby due to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, and newborn death. This group meets most months of the year. Check our website for dates.

Upcoming dates are listed on the front page of this newsletter.

Butterfly M.O.M.s (Missing Our Multiples) A social and support group for parents who have experienced the loss of one or more multiples and who are coping with the joys and challenges of raising the surviving baby(s). This group meets periodically for Mom's nights out and play dates. Please contact us for more information about this group.

Rainbow P.A.L.S. (Pregnancy After Loss Support) A social and support group especially for parents who are pregnant again after the loss of a baby, or are considering a subsequent pregnancy after loss. Our mission is to celebrate these new pregnancies, while offering support for the anxiety, fear, and emotions that are present during pregnancy after loss. Please contact us for more information about this group.

A Time to Heal A support group for parents who have made the painful decision to end a pregnancy due to maternal or fetal complications. Please contact us for more information on this group.

H.E.A.R.T.strings Companions Matching parents with peer mentors when families need personal, one-on-one support.

Resources for Siblings

Kate's Club A local, non-profit organization that empowers children and teens after the death of a parent or sibling. For more information visit katesclub.org.

The Link Counseling Center A local, non-profit community counseling center since 1971 that provides quality, affordable, confidential counseling, psychotherapy, and support groups to all ages. Their program for children: The House Next Door, thelink.org/house_next_door. Local groups are available, call 770-730-5858 for more information.

The Dougy Center Online support and resources for grieving children and families. Dougy.org

H.E.A.R.T.strings Announcements

Our sweetH.E.A.R.T.s We have created a permanent Remembrance page on our website (find it under Resources & Support, Memorial Opportunities) where you can add your baby's name to our list of "sweetH.E.A.R.T.s", who will always be remembered and loved.

Companions Program We are seeking interested mentors who have experienced early loss (first trimester, early second trimester) and would be interested in becoming a peer mentor in our Companions program. We ask that you are at least one year from your loss before volunteering. With more than 30 trained mentors, this group of volunteers is a wonderful community. Training is provided. Contact us at (404) 851-8177 or northsidepnl@gmail.com, OR register to be a mentor on our website by clicking on the gray "Companions Program Mentor Interest Form" button: northsidepnl.com/companions-peer-to-peer-mentoring.html

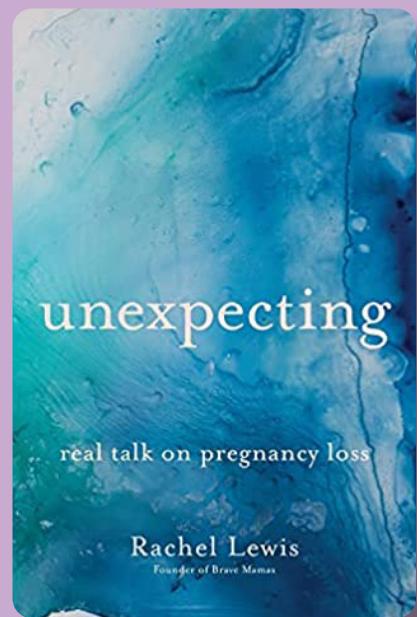
Healing Hearts Book Club & Our Favorite Internet Resources

Personal book recommendations and websites are always welcome and we would love to share with others what has been helpful for you.

Submit your favorite books and websites to northsidepnl@gmail.com.

Unexpecting: Real Talk on Pregnancy Loss

Rachel Lewis is the founder of Brave Mamas support group, an online community offering support to thousands of bereaved moms. She is a contributor to Still Standing Magazine, Pregnancy After Loss Support, and Filter Free Parents. Her work has been featured by the TODAY Show, FaithIt, Babble, and UpWorthy. Rachel holds bachelor's degrees in Theology, Bible, and Speech Communications. Her book, broken into four sections - Loss, Lament, Love and Legacy - offers a place to help navigate what comes next in a loss journey.



Internet Resources

Northsidepnl.com – Website of the H.E.A.R.T.strings program

Pregnancyafterloss.com – Support for pregnancy after the loss of a baby

StillStandingMagazine.com – For all who are grieving child loss and infertility

Missfoundation.org – A community of compassion and hope for grieving families



Rainbows on the Horizon

We would love to know if you have a new baby. Your good news is encouraging and we would like to congratulate you. Birth announcements can be submitted to the H.E.A.R.T.strings office by email at **northsidepnl@gmail.com** or by calling **404-851-8177**. Please send us your photos in the highest possible resolution.



Eloise Wren Taylor

After losing our son, Miles, at 26 weeks in August of 2020, we are proud to announce the birth of our rainbow daughter Eloise Wren Taylor.” ~ Emily & Josh Taylor

Thank You for Your Support!

There is a story behind every gift to **H.E.A.R.T.strings**. We are honored to remember these precious babies, and grateful for the generosity shown by you and your friends and families. *Our funds are held by the Northside Hospital Foundation, and are tax deductible.*

H.E.A.R.T.strings Legacy Fund

From Baby Braithwaite

From Charities Aid Foundation America

In memory of David Richard Livingston Chamberlain

- Katia Chamberlain

From Kenneth Clayton

From Adriana Dumitru

In memory of Rayleigh Genovese

- The Streets

In memory of Jaxson Aubrey Harper

- Alexus Harper

In memory of Andrew James Jarrett

- Jessica Wolff

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- Michelle Egan
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- Judith Hans
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In memory of Amelia Elisabeth Schmidt

- Stuart Scott

In memory of William Gray Shepherd

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In memory of Caleb Edward Winn

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In memory of Eli Bennett Youngblood

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In memory of Bowen Matthew Zeifman

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Atlanta Walk to Remember Fund

Maternal Gynerations, AWTR Sponsor

Neonatology Associates of Atlanta, PC, AWTR Sponsor

Northside Hospital, AWTR Sponsor

Northside Hospital Cherokee Auxiliary, AWTR Sponsor

Comcast Business, AWTR Sponsor

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In memory of Matthew David Bunt

- Douglas & Patricia Bunt

From Melissa Cox

In memory of Olivia MacDonald

- Catie MacDonald

From Harshini Patel

In memory of Harrison David Philbeck

- Tom & Kyle Philbeck

In memory of Eli Bennett Youngblood

- Brooks Youngblood

Reagan Marie Teddy Bear Fund

From Adriana Dumitru

In memory of Harrison David Philbeck

- Clare Forlenza

In memory of Nayel Rayeed

Gifts in Kind

- Handmade blankets from Connie Proco-Village of Deaton Creek
- Blankets & Hats by Bundles for Babies- Mallorie Isom
- Hand painted memory boxes from Dedicated Artists of South Florida

If you would like to make a donation to the H.E.A.R.T.strings Perinatal Bereavement Program, please go to our website at northsidepnl.com and click on the "donations" tab or call us at 404-851-8177. No donation is too large or too small. We often asked to give guidance on items needed by the office.

New: We have an Amazon Wish List!

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3Q51AUIQOEY3H?ref_=wl_share

Memory Boxes

H.E.A.R.T.strings uses a simply decorated memory box for our families. If you would like to donate decorated memory boxes, a photo of our box is below. We use a standard white photo box, and the elephants can be found at Michaels, item number 10436438.

If you would like to add contents, we would love you to fill these boxes with anything that has helped you along your journey or something you think may help someone else.

Other items we are always in need of:

- Hand and foot mold kits
- Kleenex boxes or small, "pocket" sized Kleenex packs
- Preemie sized clothing for boys and girls
- Knitted or crocheted blankets in all sizes
- Precious metal clay

You can also support H.E.A.R.T.strings by linking your Kroger Plus card to our office. Please follow the link to get started:
<https://www.kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow/>



Your Generosity Makes a Tremendous Difference in Our Mission!

Our Partners

- Big Canoe – Friends of the Auxiliary
- Frances Jackson – Big Canoe
- Canton Funeral Home & Cemetery at Macedonia Memorial Park
- Carter's
- Colton's Comfort
- Joy Cannis Photography
- Northside Hospital Atlanta Auxiliary
- Northside Hospital Cherokee Auxiliary
- Northside Hospital Forsyth Auxiliary

Thank
You!