



## H.E.A.R.T.strings Program Overview and Impact Report

FY 10-1-2019/9-30-2020

The H.E.A.R.T.strings Perinatal Bereavement Office at Northside Hospital is considered one of the leading perinatal loss programs in the United States, supporting families experiencing the death of a baby and the loss of a pregnancy due to miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, premature delivery, neonatal death, or termination due to problems with the baby or the mother. In 2011, we became a pioneer in the perinatal palliative care arena by launching the H.E.A.R.T.strings Perinatal Palliative Care Program. Since its onset, the program has provided care to many families experiencing the birth of a baby with a fatal diagnosis. This program serves as a complement to our ever-evolving perinatal bereavement support efforts.

### **Direct Patient and Community Support:**

Our database of 3,600 families, many of whom come to us from other hospitals in Georgia and throughout the country, enables us to communicate year-round with those who requested support. We cover all three Northside Hospital campuses and support over 1,000 patients a year in various entry points such as L&D, SCN, High Risk Perinatal, ICU, Surgical Services, Emergency Department and outpatient offices.

Our work includes inpatient and post-discharge support, with many patients continuing contact with our office well after the first year. We attribute much of this to our various support group offerings through which we support approximately 300 families:

- Caring & Coping: Meets monthly supporting general pregnancy loss and served 73 individuals coming from four other hospitals and around the community. 2020 meetings went virtual and sustained attendance numbers.
- Loss Parents of Atlanta: New (2020) online community for general pregnancy loss with 25 members.
- Rainbow P.A.L.S. (Pregnancy After Loss Support): Online community of over 140 people supporting each other before, during and after pregnancy following a loss.
- Butterfly M.O.M.s (Missing Our Multiples): Online community of 40 members raising surviving multiples together.
- Time to Heal: Online community of over 50 members supporting each other following loss due to medical termination.
- H.E.A.R.T.strings Companions: Peer-to-peer mentoring supporting 35 families over three years to date.

Our bereavement support also includes a candlelight *memorial service* hosted by the NSH Chaplains twice a year, and H.E.A.R.T.strings hosts the *Atlanta Walk to Remember* that takes place every October. Our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary event (Oct. 2019) hosted more than 900 people from around the state and beyond, the largest of its kind in the state. Sponsors donations of over \$15,000 (a record) make it possible to keep this event free and open to the public.

The *H.E.A.R.T.strings Perinatal Palliative Care program* provided consultation and support for 10 families (representing all three NSH campuses), and this year we designed, wrote and produced a custom consultation book for these patients.

Our *website* ([northsidepnl.com](http://northsidepnl.com)) offers valuable grief support resources and received over 4,000 unique visits, and our *email list-serve* has over 1,300 contacts.

### **Staff Training and Support:**

We focus heavily on providing perinatal loss and bereavement training for staff at Northside Hospital, and we recognize compassionate care given by nurses through our Good Grief Club and elephant pin award. We are part of the year-round, tri-campus new intern education for L&D, SCN, HRP, Surgical Services and the ED. We also provide classes for continuing education that remain in high demand on all campuses. These classes served 170 staff and providers and include:

- Annual Symposium: Clinical Perspectives on Perinatal Loss (5<sup>th</sup> annual in 2019)
- Special Delivery: Perinatal Palliative Care
- Sacred Work: The Beauty of Caring for Perinatal Loss Families

H.E.A.R.T.strings staff, all of whom hold certifications, continued to seek and complete various additional education and certifications.

### **Fundraising and Community Support:**

We are supported in our work by individuals, organizations and companies. Donors supported H.E.A.R.T.strings through three funds held by the Northside Foundation with monetary gifts totaling over \$40,000, through the Kroger linked giving program, and by donating gifts-in-kind. Northside Hospital employee giving to H.E.A.R.T.strings totaled over \$7,000. We also receive financial and in-kind support from the Northside Hospital Auxiliary (all three campuses), Mom365, Carter's Baby Clothing, and more.

### **Special recognitions for our program in the past year include:**

- Successfully petitioning the Governor of Georgia's office to dedicate March 20, 2020, the first day of spring, as Pregnancy After Loss Awareness Day.
- Highlighted with stories by Fox5's Medical Team and the AJC Pulse.

*It is our honor to serve and support families through the most devastating time in their lives. Our goal is to connect them to a community where they can find support and understanding, and where they can begin their healing journey. We are grateful to the many individuals and groups who surround us with their support as we do this important work.*