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## **Grief Education Program Addresses Stillbirth**

Angel Names Association (ANA), an area nonprofit that assists families of stillborn children, debuted its 2005-2006 Grief Education Program recently at Saratoga Hospital.

The program, presented by two midwives and a bereaved parent, teaches attendees how to support families who have endured infant death due to miscarriage or stillbirth. It provides opportunities for participants to role play and practice what they have learned.

“Situations where participants will use this information are likely to be emotionally laden, and having practiced may help them feel more comfortable when they face the situation in real life,” noted presenter Jane Knight.

This is particularly true for employers and coworkers, who must address very sensitive material while maintaining a professional environment. “There is a false assumption that empathy and professionalism cannot comfortably coexist. In reality, empathy can create a work environment that is more efficient and effective. It is a situation where knowledge truly is powerful and healing,” said presenter Michelle Mosca.

Area employers have used the program to help transition bereaved parents back to the workplace. Bristie, whose employer and coworkers have attended the program, felt great support when she returned to work after the stillbirth of her son, Brayden. “The program helped me make that scary transition from the protective world I had created after Brayden’s death, back to my 'normal' world,” said Bristie. “My co-workers were glad to be informed about how to handle the situations and emotions I was going through. It helped prepare us all for me to return to work and still feel protected and safe there everyday.” Though designed to help employers, coworkers, friends and family in their attempts to support bereaved parents, attendees are often the bereaved parents themselves.

Tracy, whose daughter, Alexis, was stillborn in 2003, attended the program at Saratoga Hospital and stressed the importance of sharing the message. “The presentations were thorough, informative and touching. Your messages need to get out...grief isn’t a topic that should be swept under the carpet and hidden from,” said Tracy.

The Grief Education Program is offered gratis by ANA and will be tailored to participants’ needs and requests. For more information please contact Michelle Mosca via email at [mgmosca@msn.com](mailto:mgmosca@msn.com), or by phone at 518-654-2411.

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