

Parents of Premature Infants Can Find Comfort in ICN "Survival" Tote Bags

By Melanie Dick, Staff Writer

Allegheny General Hospital recently implemented a program that provides a "survival" tote bag for each family whose premature infant has been admitted to the Intensive Care Nursery (ICN).

The program is an incentive of the Child Health Association of Sewickley, a philanthropic organization that promotes child health in western Pennsylvania. When a member of the association contacted Diane Shaffer, AGH developmental specialist, with information about the totes, she knew this would be a program that patients and families could benefit from at Allegheny General.

Contents include a parent handbook, a current issue of the March of Dime's *Preemie Magazine*, a journal, a photo album, information about respiratory illnesses that premature babies are vulnerable to, snacks, water, hand sanitizer, and a patient satisfaction survey.

"Giving birth prematurely and having your baby admitted to the Intensive Care Nursery is a traumatic experience for parents to go through, and these tote bags offer some comfort to help them get through it," said Ms. Shaffer. "The tote project demonstrates that people are aware of how difficult this situation is for families and wish to help take care of some of the little things."

Mary Jo Crane of the Child Health Association of Sewickley gave birth prematurely at a hospital in Ohio, and during her stay she received a family tote bag. Because of the positive experience she and her family had, she decided to bring the concept back to Pennsylvania with her to help other parents in the way that she was helped. Michele Edwards, also from the Child Health Association of Sewickley, gave birth prematurely and her baby was cared for at the Allegheny General Hospital ICN. Due to her experience with AGH, she contacted Ms. Shaffer and suggested that the tote project be implemented at this institution.

“Parents of premature infants appreciate knowing that there are people who understand what they’re going through; it makes them feel special,” said Pamela Bower, AGH social worker.