

### Spotlight on the Triangle H Meetup Group



What do you do if you are interested in meeting other people with herpes in your area for support and social events, but there isn't an established HELP or other support group nearby? For Meredith, a North Carolina resident, the answer was meetup.com, an online network of tens of thousands of local groups that enables users to reach out and make connections locally. The site is home to groups of dog lovers, French speakers, scrapbookers and more . . . so why not people with H?

Meredith launched the Triangle (NC) Area H Meetup a few months after her original diagnosis last year. While Meredith admits having a difficult time with her diagnosis at first, starting a group locally and meeting others helped with the adjustment. "Starting the meetup.com group, just one year ago, was a blessing for me," Meredith says. "I started this group after receiving the 'gift' in early 2007, as I was seeking support and fellowship. To gain a great group of friends for fun social activities and support was what I needed most. This group has so many wonderful people. Hearing their struggles, life experiences, and sharing stories . . . I understand how common herpes is, that it's a manageable skin irritation, and that my life isn't over. It's a condition that I refuse to let define me."

According to the meetup.com site, the Triangle Area H group is one of the largest H-related groups on the site, with more than 100 members. The group is for people of all ages who have herpes (HSV 1 or HSV 2) and would like to meet other people sharing their experiences. The goal of the group is to not only become an active online community, but also a local community of friends who can enjoy and support one another.

Indeed, while providing a support network for members, the group also serves a social function. Individuals arrange events, or meetups, via the site and all interested members can attend. Events run the gamut from a night at the theater or a local comedy club, to a backyard barbeque. As Meredith comments, "I am really proud of our diversity and we take great care in providing an informal, relaxed atmosphere at our events that allow our members to network with others in our area with H! While not all group members attend "offline" events, Meredith is hopeful. "I hope that those that haven't participated in a group activity yet will venture out to meet others," she comments. "NO one needs to deal with this alone." Like many others, Meredith found that this support from others is what helped move her toward acceptance. "It helps that I have found a great group of friends that are very understanding and supportive," she notes. "For those that are having some difficult times? Slowly, with help and support, things will start to look up."

To find (or start) a meetup in your area, check out [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) .