

IN THE COMMUNITY

A SHAREBABY STORY

HOW THE INSTITUTE'S TRAININGS PROPELLED THEIR LEADERSHIP JOURNEYS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

It's hard enough to be a new parent: the sleepless nights, the constant feedings, plus the cost of all of that baby gear. And diapers! So. Many. Diapers. It's a lot for any family to manage, but even harder for families with limited resources.

Unfortunately, many families in Baltimore struggle to afford all of the necessities that come with babies and toddlers. One Baltimore-based non-profit wanted to change that. [ShareBaby](#) seeks to address the unmet basic needs of Baltimore's young children through the distribution of diapers and other essential items.

SHAREBABY'S STORY

ShareBaby was founded in 2014 by three Baltimore-area moms, Maya Ammons, Kristin Finkelstein, and Kate Mumaw, who were looking to responsibly donate their used baby items to other area moms. Their search left them frustrated, so they decided to create their own solution. What began as a distribution of a few hundred items each month through a network of friends and family has evolved into a fully equipped 9,000-square-foot warehouse, reliably delivering more than 200,000 diapers and other essentials per month to more than 15,000 of Baltimore's most vulnerable children. ShareBaby also provides a pantry of baby supplies and gear through more than 70 community partners.

MEET VALENCIA AND ALICIA

Integral to ShareBaby's growth are two dynamic staff members: Valencia Hike and Alicia Sindlinger. Hike serves as the director of operations for ShareBaby. She has held leadership roles in various community organizations throughout Baltimore and is deeply committed to driving positive change within the Baltimore community. She participated in the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute's Professional Leadership Program for Women's 2024 cohort.

Sindlinger is ShareBaby's communications manager. She has always had a passion for non-profit work, and previously worked for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, as well as other public sector national consulting roles. Sindlinger participated in the Institute's Next Level Leaders' 2024 cohort.

Both Hike and Sindlinger are incredibly passionate about the work of ShareBaby.

"I got involved with ShareBaby when my daughter was a toddler," shares Sindlinger. "I just couldn't imagine the stress of not being able to provide for the basic needs of your child. I started first as a volunteer. But then I thought, this is really awesome work and I wanted to be more involved."

When Sindlinger started volunteering with ShareBaby in 2017, the organization was still relatively small. Fast-forward a few years. The COVID pandemic caused a multifaceted crisis for baby items: an interrupted supply chain resulted in increased prices while workers around the world faced job insecurity. ShareBaby leaned in, mobilizing even more resources to meet the increased need in Baltimore.

Fortunately, during the aftermath of COVID, experienced community organizer Valencia Hike also joined the team.

"I am passionate about refining processes and procedures. I believe optimizing efficiency enables us to allocate more valuable time to our partners, empowering them to further engage in the community's critical work," explains Hike.

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DR. NANCY GRASMICK
Leadership
Institute

All told, Hike collaborates with more than 70 area partners who serve as the conduit to connect ShareBaby's supplies to the families who need them. Under Hike's leadership, ShareBaby made process changes to help the warehouse become more efficient, such as shifting to fully online ordering.

BEYOND LEADERSHIP

Both Hike and Sindlinger were exceptional leaders long before their careers intersected with the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute. Yet both women credit their participation in the Institute as the catalyst that helped propel their leadership journey to the next level.

"I first learned about the Institute when the Professional Leadership Program for Women came in to volunteer. I helped coordinate their work with ShareBaby and I really enjoyed learning about the program, so I decided to participate in Next Level Leaders. It was an absolutely amazing experience," says Sindlinger.

Sindlinger particularly appreciated the value of the program's capstone project.

"ShareBaby had no process for new hires. I created a process that we can now duplicate for each new hire, saving our entire team a lot of time," she shares.

She also appreciated the 360° Leadership Assessment, a comprehensive tool that gathers data from a wide variety of sources within a leadership chain, providing valuable insight into an individual's attitude, influence, and competencies.

"It was very eye opening and showed me areas that I could really work on. It's a very powerful tool because I can continue to evolve beyond just this program. I will be forever thankful for the program's lasting impact on me."

LEADERSHIP LAYERS

For Valencia Hike, the Professional Leadership Program for Women helped her feel more empowered as a leader.

"There were many things we discussed that felt like light bulb moments, providing me several 'aha' realizations. One key insight was how women often are excessively hard on themselves. We set these high standards for excellence, often without realizing that we're already giving 110%, and exceeding expectations," shares Hike. "It was incredibly empowering to see other women recognizing themselves in this experience and saying, 'That's me! We can all relate to this!' These were just some of the significant ways the program helped me."

Hike continues, "In the cohort, only a few women shared another layer of complexity: not only being a woman but also being Black. My passion is sometimes misinterpreted as I strive to be a leader and grow in my position. I've been labeled as the 'angry Black woman' or seen as 'too much.' This has been a constant challenge throughout my career, and I've been working to understand why. The program helped me break through these layers, allowing me to understand and celebrate my strengths. I gained powerful tools that benefitted me and my entire team."

Sindlinger and Hike's rave reviews of the Institute's programs piqued other team members' interest, having a ripple effect across the whole organization.

"When Alicia returned and shared what she learned with me, I said, 'Oh my gosh, I want to experience that!'" says Hike. "And then I reached out and encouraged our warehouse manager to participate in one of the Institute's two-day workshops. He came back with his eyes lit up like kids' eyes on Christmas morning! He was completely re-energized! The Institute's programs lift a heavy weight off of leaders. You feel like you don't have to do this alone. There's a better way."

