



CHOICE WORDS

Center for Humane Options In Childbirth Experiences

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Meet Your Midwives

Tanya Rable-Collins, CPM

Like most things in my life, my interest in birthwork happened while I was pursuing another path. I had taken a life-changing self-defense class from Impact Safety which empowered me to get interested in women's issues, including becoming an instructor for the program. Then I read *Birth in Four Cultures* by Brigitte Jordan. I read that the United States used the most technology in birth, yet had infant mortality rates almost as high as Guatemala, while the United Kingdom and Sweden, where midwives are primary care givers for birth, had much lower rates of infants dying during birth. It was a shocking revelation to me. Another part of the book that incensed me was an anthropologist's description of a laboring mom being told by her nurse that she didn't have to push and needed to wait until the doctor got there before she was allowed to push. (*emphasis mine*) After discussing this with a friend who had completed a monitrice course at CHOICE, she told me that another course was starting soon. With that gentle nudge, I signed up for the class and started my journey as a birthworker.



I worked as a doula and monitrice for over 4 years before beginning a midwifery apprenticeship in 1997. Both of my children were born at home (one in a birthing tub) during my apprenticeship. I started teaching childbirth education classes for CHOICE in 2001 and began work as a primary midwife in 2002. I became a NARM Certified Professional Midwife in 2009.

I believe that one of the best things I can do as a birthworker is to help families empower and educate themselves so they can make the decisions that work best for them. Sometimes that empowerment happens in a class or a prenatal appointment and often it happens during a labor and birth. To me birthwork is akin to dropping a stone in water; the effort looks minimal, but the waves move outward, impacting more and more people. It is a privilege to midwife!

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Doulas:

Sheena Bayo
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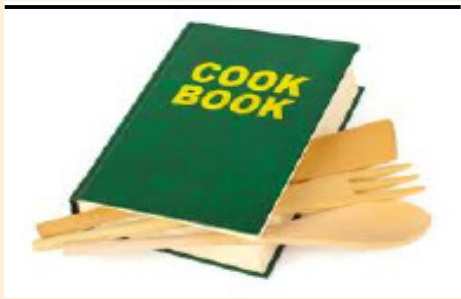
When I'm not helping birthing mamas and families, I have a passion for lifelong learning and have been helping my children educate themselves via homeschooling. I teach two history classes and love the French language, singing and playing music, knitting, literature and writing. I also like to swim, bicycle and speed-walk. ♥

CHOICE Year In Review

- **WE ARE GROWING!** We have now expanded to 5 Prenatal Rooms! Beginning in December we began renting an additional Prenatal Room on the lower level of our office to accommodate our growing Home Birth and Doula business. In the previous location we only had 3 Prenatal Rooms!! Thanks to everyone in the community for your continued support!
- **SPREAD THE WORD!!!** CHOICE is looking for like minded practitioners to rent space in the lower level of our office building. There are currently 5 offices available in a variety of sizes. If you would like more information about what is available or would like to set up a time to look at the space, feel free to call us at 614-263-2229. We are open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11-4 and 6-9pm. You can also e-mail us at www.choicemidwives@aol.com.
- **CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION CLASSES** 108 families attended CHOICE's Childbirth Education Classes in 2010. If you have a friend who is pregnant spread the word about our Natural Childbirth Education Classes!
- **BABIES BORN** CHOICE Midwives and Doulas once again attended a record breaking number of births in 2010. CHOICE had 148 babies born in 2010.

CHOICE Babies Born			
Year	# of Babies Born	Increase since previous year	Increase since 2007
2007	56		
2008	71	27%	27%
2009	111	56%	98%
2010	148	33%	164%

- **SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS** In 2010, a record number of community organizations invited CHOICE midwives to help educate their members about gentle, natural birth options. If you know of an organization that could benefit from our Community Outreach Program, feel free to e-mail their information to CHOICEmidwives@aol.com
- **COMMUNITY EVENTS** We participated in the following community events in 2010: Earth Day, Community Festival, The Hot Times Festival, The International Festival, and Women's Night Out. We estimate that we spoke with over 9,000 people. What great community outreach!
- **RESOURCE ROOM** Our resource room had 268 donations and pick-ups in 2010. We are happy to accept maternity clothing, baby clothing, toys or other infant accessories in good condition for our resource room. We have been working with other organizations to pass along any donations that we cannot use at the time, so please remember the resource room when you are spring cleaning. Don't forget that we are a Non-Profit Organization and all of your donations are tax deductible.
- **PARENT SUPPORT GROUP** Our Parent Support Group has grown tremendously this past year! They have an active e-list, weekly meetings, sponsored speakers, group outings and a Mothership Fund which helps provide grants to families who need financial assistance.
- **LENDING LIBRARY** We have expanded our lending library to include many popular parenting and childbirth books and DVDs. If you have any books that you would like to donate to our library please bring them to the office during office hours. We are open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11-4 and 6-9 p.m. All donations are tax deductible!
- **ADDITIONAL SERVICES** One of our midwives continues to offer prenatal massage therapy and one of our doulas offers placental encapsulation. ♥



Healthy CHOICE Families Cookbook

As you have heard, we are putting together a CHOICE cookbook as a fundraiser for our Mothership Fund. Our Mothership Fund is used to help women who want choices in their childbirth but cannot afford to pay the entire fee for services that CHOICE provides. We are asking for recipe donations to include in our cookbook.

We have already received many wonderful recipes, but we would love to have more! It's not too late; the deadline to submit your recipe is the 28th of February!

Once we have compiled all the recipes, we will assemble them and publish a spiral bound book and sell them for \$15.00 each. If you would like to have one of your recipes included, please send it to the CHOICE office at 5721 N. High St., Worthington, Ohio 43085 by February 28, 2011. You can also email it to Jessica Buell (jhbuell1824@gmail.com) or Amy Wakeling (amy@birthis-natural.net).

Also, we will publish your name with your recipe, so if you do not want your name published, please let us know at the time you submit.

Thank you,
The CHOICE Staff ♥



CHOICE Words



Find us on Facebook

Come and visit us on Facebook! We have a pretty active page that will help you keep up to date with all that is going on in the CHOICE world! From new babies to community events and fund raisers, this is a great way to stay connected to your birth team!

You can link to our page by visiting our main web site, www.choicemidwives.org and clicking the Facebook button or by searching for us on Facebook directly under CHOICE-Center for Humane Options in Childbirth Experiences. There are also two other great Facebook pages, one for our doulas at CHOICE-Doulas, and one for our CHOICE Parent Support Group! ♥



CHOICE Midwives and Doulas have been busy expanding our current community outreach programs. Special thanks go to all of you who have donated gently used maternity clothes, baby clothes, baby furniture and equipment to our **Parent Resource Center**.

In late November Jill ventured to the **Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility** in Delaware to teach two separate classes on "Birthing Alternatives". This facility houses female offenders ages 12-21. The majority of young women were eager to hear and participate in the conversation. Our class is going to be part of this facility's new "Parenting" course.

We also have plans to collaborate with The **Huckleberry House** in Columbus. Huckleberry House was established in

1970 and continues to provide a safe place for runaway youth in Columbus. Currently the Huckleberry House is in need of maternity pants. If you have some maternity pants that you would like to donate please drop them off in our resource room.

In March we will be heading to **Hilliard High School** to speak about the benefits of breastfeeding and natural birth.

CHOICE recently submitted a grant proposal to further our abilities to reach out to the youth in our community.

We are always available for public speaking engagements, so if you know an individual, group or organization that would benefit from a CHOICE educational presentation, please let us know. ♥

Upcoming Events



Worthington Chiropractic Girls Night Out to be held Friday, February 25th from 6-9 pm

CHOICE will be joining Worthington Chiropractic for Girls Night Out on February 25th from 6-9pm at 6180 Linworth Road.

Get pampered! Bring your girlfriends! This will be our third year attending this event. Lots of great local businesses will be there and offer free samples!

Stop by our booth for a chance to enter our raffle for a ticket to Studio 35. Tickets are only \$1.00!

Don't miss the 5th Annual

BABY BONANZA
& Kid's Expo!

Central Ohio's LARGEST
maternity, baby and child expo!

Sunday, March 27th, 2011
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Aladdin Shrine Event Center
(near Easton Town Center)

www.BabyBonanza.net

Baby Bonanza and Kid's Expo to be held Sunday, March 27th from 10 am - 4 pm

We are also looking forward to attending the Baby Bonanza for the first time this year.

Feel free to stop by our booth and enter our raffle for a chance to win a ticket to Studio 35!! Raffle Tickets are only \$1.00!

Welcome to Our New Babies and Congratulations, Mom and Dad!



July 2010

3rd Erin and Rick Voithofer.....	Nyla Lippman.....	8 lbs.
5th..... Angi and Charlie Martin.....	Luxe Yeardeley.....	6 lbs. 11 oz.
5th..... Ramona Palm-Oslin.....	Kiley Renee.....	6 lbs. 7 oz.
6th..... Kristina and Aaron MacCaughey.....	Annabelle Mae.....	6 lbs. 5 oz.
9th..... Tonia and Josh Amonds.....	Alexis Jay.....	6 lbs. 12 oz.
9th..... Hannah and Dan Lauer.....	Nathan.....	7 lbs. 6 oz.
9th..... Courtney and Clint Workman.....	Tyler Jordin.....	7 lbs. 15 oz.
9th..... Melody and Mike McCleese.....	Cait.....	10 lbs. 8 oz.
10th..... Rebecca and Joseph Tien.....	Taran Avi.....	7 lbs. 1 oz.
11th..... Jenny and Ryan Caesar.....	August Rodney.....	7 lbs. 10 oz.
13th..... Libby and Dan Kopec.....	Delaney Quinn.....	6 lbs. 1 oz.
17th..... Brittaini Pulver & Aaron Montelongo ..	Adelina Ida Lucia.....	8 lbs. 8 oz.
20th..... Tanya and Todd Miller.....	Joseph James.....	11 lbs. 13 oz.
23rd Nor and Basil Abdul-Razzak.....	Abdullah Basil.....	6 lbs. 14 oz.
23rd Shannon and Andrew Ginther.....	Clara Caroline.....	6 lbs. 12 oz.
27th..... Erin and Benjamin Johnson.....	August Dylan.....	10 lbs.

August 2010

4th..... Jessica Collins & James Anderson	Jesse James.....	9 lbs. 7 oz.
5th..... Michelle and Jason Harris.....	Weston Thomas.....	7 lbs. 5.6 oz.
8th..... Aja Farris.....	Aviva Corinne.....	7 lbs. 3 oz.
15th..... Taylor and Jon Deutschle.....	Lucas Robert.....	8 lbs. 15 oz.
18th..... Hanna and Caleb Ely.....	Otto Donham.....	8 lbs. 4 oz.
19th..... Lisa and Jack Rigali.....	Isabella Moree.....	7 lbs. 10 oz.
21st..... Stefanie and Lance Osborne.....	Elias.....	7 lbs. 14 oz.
23rd Bri and Ryan Manczak.....	Petra Alexandria.....	8 lbs. 4 oz.
27th..... Melissa and Doug Paxton.....	Hunter Leon.....	9 lbs. 6 oz.
30th..... Carrie and Dave Davenport.....	Elijah Thomas.....	6 lbs 15 oz.

September 2010

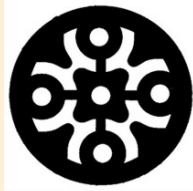
1st..... Molly and Jordan Powell.....	Luke.....	8 lbs. 9 oz.
1st..... Alia Simon and Ken Montijo.....	Ariana Elizabeth.....	7 lbs. 12 oz.
2nd..... Kelly and Tracy Wilson.....	Eva Skye.....	8 lbs.
2nd..... Colleen and Neil Schroeder.....	Eden Riley.....	8 lbs. 12 oz.
4th..... Sara and Chris Rismiller.....	Calin Jack.....	9 lbs. 12 oz.
10th..... Alana and Mike Contreras.....	Isla Addyson.....	7 lbs. 12 oz.
11th..... Keisa and Mike Lee.....	Niya Tara.....	10 lbs.
12th..... Lauren Arbolina.....	Annabelle Jillian.....	9 lbs. 2 oz.
13th..... Joanie Droughton.....	Elise Joan.....	9 lbs. 1 oz.
17th..... Jhyana and Michael Koob.....	Noah Michael.....	8 lbs.
22nd..... Eve and Bill Vines.....	Marybeth.....	5 lbs. 15 oz.
22nd..... Lorraine and David Robinson.....	Beatrix Josephine.....	8 lbs.
29th..... Karen Beculhimer & John Michael.....	Benjamin.....	7 lbs. 5 oz.
30th..... Rachael and Shane Smith.....	Dale Marie.....	7 lbs. 12 oz.

October 2010

1st..... Jessie and Nicholas Marr.....	Covin.....	9 lbs.
6th..... Emily and Rob Kelly.....	Sloane.....	8 lbs.

MORE Upcoming Events

**Community
Festival at
Goodale Park
June 24th -26th**



Community Festival

CHOICE will also attend ComFest again this year. Stop by and see us. We are always looking for CHOICE clients to volunteer at our booth and talk about your birth experience. If you are interested call the office (614-263-2229) for more information. See you there!



Annual CHOICE Picnic and Silent Auction July 30th from 5 - 8 p.m.

Come join us for our Annual Picnic and Silent Auction on the CHOICE front lawn. This event is a good time to visit with friends and the CHOICE Staff!

There are always lots of great items from local artists and businesses in the silent auction to bid on. All proceeds from this auction go toward our Mothership Fund to help families that cannot afford our services.

We will have limited table and chair space, so please bring lawn chairs or a blanket to spread on the lawn. We will provide a grill, lawn games and a play area for the children.

Please bring a potluck dish to share. CHOICE will provide beverages, cups, plates, napkins and utensils.

If you would like to be added to our e-mail list for upcoming events at CHOICE send your e-mail address to: choicemidwives@aol.com ♥

9th.....	Josey and Matt Hensley	Scotlynn Olivia	7 lbs. 14 oz.
17th.....	Laura and Aaron Alexander.....	Graham Leoluca	8 lbs. 4 oz.
18th.....	Elizabeth Reynolds and Sung Ho	Isaac Kyune	8 lbs. 14 oz.
23rd	Lauren and Justin Genter-Reynolds ..	Miriam.....	7 lbs.
24th.....	Holly and Patrick Vail	Patrick Allen.....	9 lbs. 5 oz.
28th.....	Sophia and Jason Taylor.....	Grace Kimberly.....	10 lbs. 2 oz.
30th.....	Jenny Pniewski and Steve Glick	W. Oslo	8 lbs. 2 oz.
30th.....	Eva and Kyle Heiberger	Kenneth Allen	8 lbs. 2 oz.
31st.....	Julia and Evan McLean.....	Avah Rose	9 lbs. 8 oz.

November 2010

1st.....	April and James Kerwood	Abigail Grace	7 lbs. 3 oz.
7th.....	Bess Schaefer and Jacob Sauer.....	Guthrie Abraham	8 lbs.
12th.....	Amira and Kirk Hartman.....	Grady William	6 lbs.
13th.....	Sherry and Eric Warden	Annaka Rose	8 lbs. 2 oz.
15th.....	Fitzgerald, Khara.....	Malan.....	4 lbs.
.....	Marco.....	5 lbs.
16th.....	Lauren and Dan Hughes	Adelaide Rose	7 lbs.
23rd	Sheri and Andy Fischer	Kaerys Lal.....	6 lbs. 7 oz.
25th.....	Joelle and Hans Hochstedler	Marley Grace	7 lbs. 3 oz.
27th.....	Kate and David Curlis-West.....	Violet Jean.....	6 lbs. 10 oz.
27th.....	Abby Dorn and Carlos Bermudez	Maceo Dorn	8 lbs. 8 oz.
28th.....	Lindsey and Rob Hawse	Isabelle Norene	6 lbs. 9 oz.

December 2010

3rd	Beverly Batte	Liam.....	10 lbs. 4 oz.
6th.....	Christine and Jason Duffy	Michael John	7 lbs. 2 oz.
.....	Melia Grace	6 lbs. 12 oz.
7th.....	Meg and Lamine Savane	Sireh Caroline.....	6 lbs. 12 oz.
.....	Ramata Anna.....	6 lbs. 12 oz.
12th.....	Shelley and Chris Martin	Vera Ingrid	7 lbs. 14 oz.
12th.....	Devon and Jason Morgan	Evelyn.....	3 lbs. 11 oz.
14th.....	Christine and Billy Davidson	Barnaby	9 lbs. 6 oz.
15th.....	Liv Gjestvang and Julie Applegate	Karsten	7 lbs.
17th.....	Kelly and Rob Aitken	Kaia May.....	7 lbs. 13 oz.
18th.....	Anna and Yuriy Momotok	Leonid Yuriy	7 lbs. 6 oz.
18th.....	Kathy Stroop	Olivia Rose	8 lbs. 12 oz.
18th.....	Katy and David Frolick	Max Sholom.....	7 lbs. 13 oz.
18th.....	Sarah and Leonel Stanich.....	Ester Sophia.....	8 lbs. 3 oz.
19th.....	Holly and Daniel Bell.....	Lucas	10 lbs. 2 oz.
22nd.....	Julie and Frank Fernandez	Natalie Marie	6 lbs. 4 oz.
23rd	Kelly and Joe Siragusa	Anthony Nicholas.....	7 lbs. 1 oz.
25th.....	Marissa and Tibon Kaloga.....	Ezra	9 lbs. 12 oz.
30th.....	The Harpster Family.....	Baby Girl.....	6 lbs. 9 oz.
31st.....	The Travis Family.....	Amelia Ray	9 lbs. 5 oz.

January 2011

2nd.....	The Oswalt Family	Luke William	9 lbs.
3rd	Rachel and John Garrett.....	Rosalee	7 lbs. 9 oz.
8th.....	Dawn and Carson Combs	Jacy	9 lbs. 4 oz.
15th.....	Andrea and Paul Giorgi.....	Rilynn Joy	8 lbs. 8 oz.
16th.....	Sarah and Scott Michels	Luella Bell	7 lbs. 8 oz.
20th.....	Nancy Jesser	Maya Urban	6 lbs. 12 oz.
23rd	Gina Helbley.....	Anna Journey	7 lbs. 4 oz.

Our Doula Business is Growing!

Although many families know CHOICE for our home birth midwives, our doula business is growing. Thanks to many new movies, books, media stories and friends sharing their positive experiences, people are becoming more aware of the state of hospital birth in the U.S. This has created an increased demand for birth doulas as more hospital birthers seek ways to make their experiences more positive.

Many of our readers have had home births, but if you transferred to the hospital, you know how invaluable the presence of your midwife was in the hospital setting. Maybe you even had a doula at your home birth for extra support. What about all of your friends who aren't having a home birth? At CHOICE, the doulas say, "Doulas...Don't go to the hospital without one!"



A doula is a trained and experienced woman who provides physical and emotional support to a birthing woman and her partner. We have a team of three fabulous doulas to serve Central Ohio. All three of our doulas are experienced birthers, trained birth supporters and strong birth advocates. We believe in the importance of feeling safe and supported while birthing, no matter where you choose to give birth.

Why Choose a CHOICE Doula?

CHOICE doulas are different from other doulas.

We are doulas with midwives' spirits! We work closely with home birth midwives and have the unique opportunity to listen and share birth stories with other experienced professionals every week. We also have access to books, handouts, research, and many other resources. Occasionally the CHOICE doulas attend skills workshops, strengthening our confidence in birth as a normal, natural process. Our specialized training and constant interactions with the midwives allows us to absorb the shared information, further shaping the way we interact with our clients.

Having a group of midwives and doulas means we always have someone reliable and trustworthy who can provide back-up for birthing mamas, if necessary. This comes in very handy for each of us personally as well. People who do support work need to be well supported. We provide constant support to one another here at CHOICE, allowing us to better support you.

What to Expect from a CHOICE Doula:

When you first meet with one of our doulas, it is similar to meeting with one of our home birth midwives. Our first consult is free and lasts for one hour. During this appointment, you can expect to receive a packet of handouts about nutrition, birth options, and lists of other resources. Your doula will create a safe space to explore your options about birth and your choice of care providers and birthing location.

Here are some ways the CHOICE doulas can help:

- We give you 24-hour access by phone and email.
- We encourage you to get self-educated, so you can make informed decisions.
- We answer questions and have a wealth of referrals.
- If you are willing, we'd love for you to use one of our favorite care providers to ensure your best chance possible for a great experience in the hospital.
- We encourage you to write a birth plan and we'll help with birth plan revisions.
- We use your birth plan as a way to remind you to use your voice and be your own advocate at the hospital.
- We remind you of your rights: You are in charge of your body and your baby.
- We support the birth partner to be more effective and connected with the birthing mama.
- We help with positioning, comfort measures and reassurance.
- Many of our clients say that the calm, reassuring presence of their doula was what made all the difference.
- We act on behalf of the birthing family. We do not work for the hospital or the OB/CNM; we only work for you!

If you or someone you know would like to learn more about the outstanding birth services offered by the CHOICE doulas, you can call our office to book a free consultation: (614) 263-BABY or check us out on the web! Go to the CHOICE web site at www.choicemidwives.org and under "Midwives & Doulas", click on "The Doulas".

To join us on Facebook, type "CHOICE-Doulas" in your Facebook Search box. ♥

Parent Support Group News



discuss their recent experiences with people that understand and value natural birth choices, and all are strengthened and encouraged to be the best parents they can be.

The group schedules informative workshops on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. So far, discussions have included: cloth diapering, natural cleaning, baby sign language, vaccine pros and cons, slings and baby carriers, and herbs for babies and children. It is hoped that experienced parents will share their experiences with parents-to-be. All parents (and children) are welcome. There is no charge for this service

Upcoming Workshops

March 1 Land Space for Children Shannon Brewster

Just in time for spring planning! Shannon is a landscape designer. She will talk adapting your land space to include and inspire children.

March 15 Mother's Milk Bank of Ohio Diane Bates, RN, IBCLC

Located right here in Columbus, the Mother's Milk Bank provides donor breastmilk to preemies and babies with medical needs in several states. Diane will talk about the milk bank's operations. She is also a lactation consultant and will be available to answer your questions.

If you have an idea for a workshop to have during parent support group please e-mail choicemidwives@aol.com. Hope to see everyone there! 614-263-BABY

Join our Yahoo Group, by going to the CHOICE web site www.choicemidwives.org and click on *About* > *Services* > *Parent Support Group*. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click *Subscribe*.

Join the CHOICE Parent Support Group on Facebook group for discussions and updates by searching for *Choice parent support group (PSG)* on Facebook. ♥

Mothership Fund

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1,

Blast off.....



**The Mothership Fund
preparing for takeoff!**

All families should have opportunity to access the support and education provided by CHOICE. Over the years, many CHOICE clients have donated money that has been utilized to provide opportunities for other families to choose services available at CHOICE. These generous donors and our mission to make CHOICE services available to everyone, ignited our vision to launch the Mothership Fund. Mothership funds will provide financial assistance to families who complete an application process and meet certain qualifications for home birth, doula, or childbirth education fees. The more funds that are available, the more families we can assist.

Our big fund raiser right now is the **Healthy CHOICE Families Cookbook**. (See Page 3) We are gathering recipes to publish and sell cookbooks. All profits will go into the Mothership Fund! Please send your recipes to amy@birthisnatural.net or jhbuell1824@gmail.com. We can use recipes in all categories. We have already received over 100 recipes and let me tell you, it is going to be your favorite cookbook!

Our other big fund raiser is the **Spring Rummage and Bake Sale** that will be held May 21st, 9am – 3 pm. As you are doing your spring cleaning, consider donating items to our sale! You can speak to Melody at CHOICE to arrange for drop-offs. Also, if you would like to donate some yummy baked goods for the sale, that would be great too! Please help us spread the word about this fund raising event and don't forget to stop by that day!

Look for more events coming soon. If you would like to donate directly to the Mothership Fund, please send your check to CHOICE, 5721 N High St, L2, Worthington, Ohio, 43085 or donate through Paypal on the CHOICE web site. We appreciate all of your support in helping to make the Mothership Fund a huge success! ♥

Birth Stories

Adelaide Rose, 11-16-2010

My daughter Adelaide Rose was born on a brisk fall morning in November, a Tuesday. And, although much anticipated, it was completely unexpected and absolutely perfect. So much mystery had surrounded Adelaide for so long. What would her sex be? How much would she weigh? Were all her fingers and toes there? But, most importantly, when would she be due? Although dates are so relative, especially with first time moms like myself, her arrival time seemed especially shrouded in mystery. Our original guess of late October had come and gone. Now shoulder-deep into November, I had resigned myself to going about my daily life. Waiting, it seemed, was especially cruel, and the monotony of day-to-day life was a perfect sanctuary.

Monday, November 15th, I awoke in the morning to a small surprise. All along, at my prenatal appoint-

ments, my midwives, Kelley and Amy, had been asking me a standard set of questions. We were all waiting for indicators that labor might start soon. One of those questions was, 'Has your mucus changed at all? If you see something like egg whites, labor may be close.' But, alas, nothing! I checked each time I went to the restroom for weeks and weeks. No mucus, whatsoever. But, on Monday morning, to my surprise, was one solitary thick strand of mucus, clear in color and exactly like egg whites on my wad of toilet paper. Another couple of hours, and again, more mucus. I was a little excited. Once was a coincidence, I determined. But, twice seemed like something noteworthy. I immediately emailed Amy. She wisely advised that labor may be imminent. But, although I was excited, I was also in mild disbelief. I had been expecting for so long, it seemed impossible that I would ever deliver. I almost foolishly thought I would be pregnant forever.

So, I went about my daily life. I waddled through two different grocery stores. I set chicken in butter-milk to fry for dinner the next night. I

strangely bought an entire cache of music on iTunes. I did boat loads of laundry. I scrubbed my bathroom sink. And, when my usual bed time came and went, I thought nothing of it. I was engrossed in a book until 1 AM when I realized that something was... hmm... different?

How can I describe it? For the last month, at least, I had been experiencing pre-labor contractions, mostly mild in nature, sometimes completely constant throughout the day. And Monday was no different. But some time around 1 AM, I felt a contraction wrap around my waist like a belt, radiating from the front of my pelvis throughout my lower back. It wasn't any more 'painful', just different, and it took me by surprise. Something was happening. What, I didn't know. But, sure enough, another contraction and another. And interspersed, bouts of loose bowels. Was this more pre-labor, or the real deal? At home alone, I was determined to remain calm, to sleep through what I could. I didn't want to be the girl who cried wolf. So, I laid in bed and let the waves roll over me. I began to wonder about their



regularity. Certainly that would tell me whether this really was labor, or not. I went online to find a contraction timer, which I loaded onto a portable device. Then I laid in bed timing the contractions, chanting to myself, 'The pain I am feeling is not causing me injury. I am opening up like a flower.' After an hour of timing, the contractions were 5 minutes apart and 1.5 minutes in length.

My husband, Dan, it happened, was working on location in Marysville. I didn't want to call him unless it was certain I was in labor.

But after timing the contractions, it seemed like this was the real deal. The fog I was previously in lifted. I really wasn't going to be pregnant forever! And it was time to call my husband. At 3:30 AM, I made the call. And, by 4:20 AM, he was by my side. Having someone else there made me realize that the contractions had progressed. I could not talk during one. I couldn't focus on anything else in that moment. My whole world was breathing myself over that hill, and then letting go.

Dan asked what he could do to help. I was sitting on the edge of the bed with him and I said, 'Could I just squeeze your hand next time?' He said, 'Sure.'

And when the next one came, I did. I squeezed so hard. And the peak came, and then... whoa! Instead of sliding down the back side of the hill, it climbed higher and peaked again. It took my breath away. I thought something was wrong. We needed to time these contractions again. 2 minutes apart. 1 minute apart. Quicker and quicker. At 5 AM, in a mild panic, I gave Dan the okay to call the midwives. And then, it was all I could do to find a comfortable position. I tried the toilet, leaning against something, squatting, sitting. I crawled around on my hands and knees, afraid to stand. But, nothing helped me get

back in the zone. I was confused. I had been confident that I could handle the early part of labor. Where had I gone wrong? I couldn't get on top of things. I know now that I was actually in transition. Early labor had come and gone. But, at the time, I thought this was only the beginning, not the hardest part, and my confidence was shaken.

Amy was on her way by 5:20 AM, I think, and by 6 AM, Kelley and Amy were both there. When Amy arrived, she reminded me to bring my vocaliza-



tions down a few octaves. Keep them low. This helped. I stayed on my hands and knees, rocking and moaning.

I had planned to have a water birth. But, the tub wasn't filled yet! Dan started filling the tub in earnest at 5 AM, after he called the midwives. He could sense something that I could not. Things were moving fast! I thought we had more time. But, by the time Amy arrived, I wanted nothing more than to get in the tub. Surely it would bring the relief I was looking for, and would help slow things down. It felt out of control. I just needed a small break, regroup, catch my breath,

and then back on top of everything. Amy checked my dilation. 7 centimeters. I'm not sure whether the tub was really ready or not, but at some point, I just climbed in. The relief was incredible! And I labored on my hands and knees in the water for a while until I felt a change in the contractions.

I no longer felt discomfort, but an incredible desire to hold my breath. I remembered from all my reading and research that this could only mean 'pushing'. Pushing already? Can this be? I asked the midwives. Amy and

Kelley checked me, and I was fully dilated. I was given the green light. I could really push! And when the urge came, I let it take over me.

And, the only way I can describe it is to say how surprised I was at its similarity to having a bowel movement. Of course, it is incredibly more intense, almost primal, and with a completely different purpose.

This is where time escaped me. I literally stopped thinking.

Amy and Kelley were encouraging. Sometimes I responded. I was a little more surly than I had thought I would be. I could see Dan by my side, but I couldn't focus on him. All of this was

like a dream. My brain was chanting, 'push, push, push.' My whole focus was pushing and making progress. I did this on my hands and knees until someone suggested I try a seated position so I could pull back my legs as I pushed and lean back and relax when a contraction passed. This worked out well, as the midwives could check me easily and watch for the head.

Labor really is just that...labor. And I was getting a little tired, very quickly. I was overwhelmed in a way I had not expected. But I was encouraged by feeling the bulge of head between my legs, like a football sitting there waiting to be passed to the next player. It

was satisfying, this feeling. I wanted it to progress slowly to prevent tearing, to be gentle. So, I let it sit there as long as I could, only pushing when my body commanded. Amy offered perineal support, which helped even though I fought it (for some reason). I was willing things to slow, until, like a cork, 'pop!' That precious head came out! And then, slowly, the shoulders. A cord was wrapped, and then unwrapped. And then, I willed another push or two, and the body came slithering out, without any real pain or discomfort.

Dan caught Adelaide in his hands, and brought her up out of the water. Even blue and full of vernix, Adelaide was beautiful. And then, on my chest, she already felt like I had known her my whole life. The magic of skin-to-skin contact! We were bonded. All the waiting was gone. She was perfect in every way. I was in complete bliss, satisfied by the feeling of family unit. Dan and I and Adelaide were all together at last. I spent the next day with Adelaide and Dan and family, snuggled in bed, enchanted by her every move.

From start to finish, I felt a sense of calm and beauty about my pregnancy and the care I received. It was not more evident then on the actual day of birth where all the pieces fell into place. A little girl, with all her fingers and toes, weighing 7lbs. All my questions were answered. And so, I am convinced that birth really is natural. My body was really meant to do this. Nothing that took place was something I couldn't handle. And as Adelaide made her transition into the world, I did too, with the kind of pride only a mother can feel. ♥

Jill's Herbal Corner

by Jill Schroer, CPM, Herbalist

The weather is dreary...trips to the spa are expensive...so, let's pamper ourselves and each other at home.

Herbal Facial Cleansing Grains

These are gentle enough to be used everyday. Stimulating and rejuvenating for your skin. You can also use these as a full body soap substitute.

Combine together...

- 1/3 cup almonds, ground
- 2 cups oat flour
- 1/3 cup white (Kaolin) clay
- 1/2 cup each of roses and lavender, ground
- Optional: 1/4 cup cornmeal, peppermint, or chamomile

Store in an airtight container. Mix one teaspoon of this mixture with just enough water to form a paste. A small amount of honey can also be added, if desired. Leave on for a few minutes, then rinse.



Herbal Facial Steam

Choose your own special blend based on your individual skin needs. Mix equal parts of your chosen herbs.

Pour 2 cups of boiling water over 1 tablespoon of the blend. Cover tightly, and steep for 3 minutes.

Place a towel over your head, tucking around the bowl. Keep your eyes closed. Steam your face for 5 minutes, gently blowing on the herbs.



Chamomile – anti-inflammatory

Roses – softens and refines

Lavender – antibacterial, healing

Comfrey – speeds up cell renewal

Lemon Balm – soothing, cleansing

Calendula – antibacterial

Elder flower – softens wrinkles

Mint – stimulating

Rose geranium – lifts your spirits

Sage, Rosemary, Witch Hazel, Orange Peel, and Yarrow are all astringents. They tighten tissues. ♥