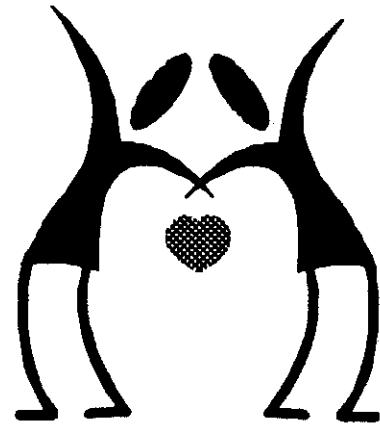


## Sister to Sister Announcements



Congratulations to Debra Gill on her new Breastfeeding Peer Counselor position at The Clinic on Altgeld!

Congratulations to Emma Gonzales on her new Local School Council position.

Congratulations to Shelly Garcia, a doula at Easter Seals CDC at Rockford IL. Her two daughters Bianca Garcia and Alicia Garcia are expecting in September and January.



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Summer 2007

# Natural Times

Peer Counselor and Doula Newsletter

## My Experience As A Breastfeeding Peer Counselor



Greetings, my name is Debra G. Gill and I am a breastfeeding peer counselor. I have two teenagers who were breastfed as babies one for six months and the other for 20 months. How did I become a breastfeeding peer counselor you asked? Well, one day as I was going about my usual breastfeeding activities my friend Belinda told me about a training class for women who had or was currently breastfeeding. This class was to train women to support other pregnant and breastfeeding women. The organization that sponsored the training was The Chicago Health Connection (CHC, then known as Chicago Breastfeeding Task Force). I took my training in 1993. Since then I have worked with mothers and pregnant women in my community giving information and lending support whenever I can. I would have never guessed nursing your baby could lead to a career opportunity, until Helen Dimas from CHC called me to inform me about a peer counselor placement opportunity.

As a peer counselor at TCA Health Inc. and TCA WIC (130th Ellis) I've had the opportunity to talk with pregnant moms and a few dads about the benefits of breastfeeding. Of course, it's always exciting to speak to the moms who have delivered and are breastfeeding. I give them the information, resources and encouragement that will hopefully lead to rewarding breastfeeding experience.

I work along with the health educator at TCA during prenatal classes and provide breastfeeding education. One of my goals in the future is to bring a breastfeeding support group to TCA Health. I want to inform and encourage women, let them know; yes you can breastfeed and do anything you want.

Debra G. Gill  
Peer Counselor at TCA Health In. NFP

## 2007 State Breastfeeding Conference

I want breastfeeding to be a leading health topic in the United States, and in order to be ahead, continuing education is needed for peer counselors. Chicago Health connection offered me an opportunity to maintain and sharpen my skills to benefit mothers at John H. Stroger Hospital as well as my community.

The 2007 State Breastfeeding Conference in Springfield, Illinois was a valuable and meaningful to me. Dr. Marianne Neifert, MD shared her own stories of the anxieties and joys of breastfeeding her five children. She emphasized the myth of trying to accomplish goals as well as be the "super-mom." Dr. Neifert encouraged women and mothers to rethink what is important to them and learn to say they cannot do it all and that is okay.

Another session that was special to me was the unique "Peer Counselor Programs, What's Working in Illinois." The peer counselors shared their experiences and were excited to continue to seek educational information that are of value to women. It is very necessary for women to have accurate information regarding breastfeeding to make informed decisions. Breastfeeding mothers sometimes feel inadequate

*continued on page 2*

continued from page 1

and as peer counselors we have to listen to the mothers that have either decided to breastfeed or are undecided about breastfeeding. The breastfeeding sessions gave me the encouragement to continue postpartum breastfeeding support, one-on-one counseling, promoting breastfeeding, and to help breastfeeding organizations protect the rights of breastfeeding mothers.

Chicago Health Connection has helped peer counselors meet the challenges of breastfeeding and their tremendous efforts has made the difference at John H. Stroger Hospital. Correct breastfeeding information is essential for peer counselors. I want to give an enormous thank you to Rachel Abramson, Charlotte Johnson, Brenda Reyes and Helen Dimas for their positive impact on breastfeeding in my community.



By Symie Dar Bertha,  
Peer Counselor  
at Stroger Hospital.  
Indiana Perinatal  
Network (IPN)  
Community-Based  
Doula Program  
in Marion County

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The Indiana Perinatal Network is proud to announce that four of the thirteen women who recently completed the community-based doula training, coordinated by IPN, will be working as full time community-based doulas at the IU School of Nursing Health Families MOM Project. Michelle Brown, Julie Daman, Latasha Day and Lakesha Holmes-Allen will provide home visitation and labor support services to young women, primarily African American, under age 24 within the MOM Project service area.

IPN has been working to bring the community-based doula program model to Indiana for over two years now, and are proud to see community-based doulas providing direct service to young women who are at greatest risk for poor birth outcomes. It is through IPN's partnership with the Healthy Families MOM Project, and funding from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, that these doulas are able to serve those in need.

Doulas are women trained to provide labor support during child birth. They provide informed and caring support to mothers before, during and after the birth of their baby. Community-based doulas are very special women who have a true understanding of the community and often have the same cultural and socioeconomic background as the women they support.

For more information on the Indiana Doula Project, please contact Sherry Matemachani at 317-490-6088.

## Calendar Events

### August 1- 7, 2007

#### World Breastfeeding Week (WBW)

This year's theme is Breastfeeding: The 1st Hour - Early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for six months can save more than ONE million babies!

As you are preparing to celebrate WBW, visit WABA's website <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org> to download materials and information including the Action Folder, whether you are writing articles for newspapers, would like to print them out to distribute or put up on your workplace's notice board.

### August 24, 2007

#### Chicago Department of Public Health's 2nd Annual Breastfeeding Awareness Walk

at Rainbow Park & Beach on 3111 E. 77th Street. You must register by contacting Michelle Maloney & Eulah Dean at 312-745-3061 or 312-437-0252. For more information you can e-mail at [Maloney\\_michelle@cdph.org](mailto:Maloney_michelle@cdph.org) or [dean\\_eulah@cdph.org](mailto:dean_eulah@cdph.org)

### September 12 – November 7, 2007

#### Chicago Health Connection (CHC) Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training

every Wednesday from 9:30a.m. to 1:00p.m. This ten-week training is for women who breastfed for at least 3 months and are interested in helping other women to breastfeed. You must register by calling or for more information, call 312-243-4772. Space is limited.

#### TBA - Fall CHC Birth Doula Training

There will be a training this fall but the date is yet to be determined. This training is DONA approved and meets the requirements for DONA certification. The cost is \$395 and space is limited. For more information, call Wandy at (312) 243-4772 ext. 227.

For more information Coalition and Task Force meetings please visit our website at [www.chicagohealthconnection.org](http://www.chicagohealthconnection.org) or call Brenda or Helen at 312-243-4772.

## The Community Health Worker by Garrette Horne

What is a community health worker (CHW), and why are they so important? It has been said that a "true promotor" or promoter of community health is one that volunteers their time for the well being of their communities; someone that acts as a natural bridge between providers and underserved populations in need of care. What makes this question difficult to answer is the fact that there are so many underserved populations with so many needs to be cared for. Since there is no specific occupational code to report in national databases, there is also no official job description to define the work done by nearly 4,000 people in Illinois alone. In order to fully understand the value of a CHW, we have to ask ourselves another question with just as much importance. What is good community health and how is it accomplished?

The Chicago Health Workers / Promoters Local Network have grown to understand that this question, along with many others, need to be addressed in order for us to fulfill our role as CHWs. For the past six months we as a network have been exploring these issues on a monthly and quarterly basis. We have outlined five pillars or areas within the community that we would like to focus on.

1. **Health Worker Support and Cohesiveness.**
2. **Community Awareness and Education.**
3. **Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity.**
4. **Comprehensive and holistic health.**
5. **Policy Change and Enforcement.**

We have found these 5 areas to be a priority in our organizing, number one being the most important. We have to provide health worker support and cohesiveness in order to reach our desired outcomes, not just professionally, but our personal outcomes as well.

If you would like to be involved in this groundbreaking discussion that defines who we are as CHWs and how we can create community change, or if you just need the support and continuing education needed to fulfill your job, please join us for our quarterly meetings. For more information and for meeting dates and times, call Garrette or Doris at (312) 243-4772 extension 225.