



Natural Times

A Community Health Worker Newsletter

In Her Own Words by Natalie Byrd



Graduation is one of those bittersweet moments.

For me, this experience was so much more than just a Peer Counselor Training. I was so excited to start the training, but had no idea what I was in store for. This training became a place of sharing, support and

love. That was the core of everything else we learned. I've learned about so much more than breastfeeding. I've gained a greater sense of self; I learned about acceptance, and most of all, I've learned what it is to truly empower another person. With that said, I sum up this training with 3 words: Educate. Empower. Elevate.

To the Funders: Thank you, for making this investment! You didn't invest in just another program, but you invested in lives. I truly believe that an investment in a person's life is the best investment you can make.

To the Executive Director and CHC staff: Thank you for your dedication! Not only to the Peer Counseling Program, but to health,

to education, to women, and everything they love.

To Brenda and Mama Helen: Thank you! I really can't put into words all that you both have taught me throughout this training. You've sown a significant seed into my life. I'm looking forward to the fruit of that seed, so that I can sow that seed into other's lives.

And last but not least, to my sisters: I stand here today with a great bond with each of you. We've laughed together, we've cried together, we've supported and encouraged one another and I'll never forget our time together. My "GIFT" to you today is simply to say keep on keeping on! You're smart, you're strong and you have the gift to touch lives in ways you don't know. My "WISH" is that you never give up - that you never stop, no matter what challenges or obstacles. We all have a duty now, it's our turn to educate, empower and elevate. I love you guys.

(Editor's note: Natalie is currently working part-time at Mile Square Health Center as a breastfeeding peer counselor on Chicago's near west side. Natalie is also an active member of the Chicago Region Breastfeeding Task Force.)



CHC is delighted to welcome Sheri Gibson, our new Development Director. Sheri comes to us with close to 10 years of experience researching and identifying funding opportunities, and has worked with major organizations providing direct service to families in low-income Chicago communities. She was the Founder and Executive Director of a nonprofit community development corporation focusing on affordable housing construction and support for home ownership in Benton Harbor, Michigan. She also has extensive previous experience in marketing and communications. Sheri brings us deep expertise and strategic thinking, and is a wonderful addition to the CHC team. Welcome Sheri to our family!

Mohri Birth Center by Rachel Abramson



*(l to r) Rachel Abramson, Loretha Weinsinger
& Rieko Kishi*

Mohri Birth Center by Rachel Abramson

As American guests in Japan, we were privileged to visit the Mohri Birth Home, a small midwifery clinic in Kobe-city. After taking several trains and walking through narrow streets, we found a small sign announcing the clinic, and discovered that we were among a group of other pilgrims who had come to visit and learn from Mrs. Mohri-sensei, the Director of the clinic. We gathered at the door, keeping our distance from the barking dog on the porch. (We learned later that he does not bark at pregnant women!)

We were welcomed into a small, warm waiting room, where we exchanged introductions and settled around the round table to receive a lesson on Japanese breast massage for early breastfeeding support. Mrs. Mohri-sensei, the Director, has developed a very effective method using heat and very gentle massage, based on an understanding of breast anatomy and a deep experience

with the nurturing of new mothers. As she demonstrated her technique using a breast model and photographs, we asked questions and our guide, midwife Rieko Kishi, translated quietly.

The strength and tender touch of Mrs. Mohri-sensei's hands made it easy to see how comforting and effective this technique would be for a new mother in the early postpartum period. The photograph of the strong milk ejection after massage demonstrated the effectiveness of the technique.

As we sat together, each visitor talked a bit about their own work and their reason for traveling to the Mohri Birth Home. The diversity of age, experience and background in the room melted away, and it was clear that there was a strongly shared appreciation for women-centered care and the essential importance of childbirth.

As a doula and a nurse-lactation consultant, Loretha and I we were impressed and inspired by the leadership in women's health that exists in the midwifery community in Japan. There is such deep knowledge and clear thinking about the needs of birthing women and their families.

We could not help but feel that the future of women and children in Japan was represented by the women who had gathered together at the Mohri Birth Home.



Rachel in Japan

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Celebrating Our First Anniversary

by Alfredo Lopez, Chicago CHW Local Network Organizer

On March 7, 2008, we celebrated our 1st Anniversary with all our Community Health Workers (CHWs) from the Chicagoland area, at the Westside Technical Institute. It was a really good gathering, and 25 people shared their own experiences and skills in different fields. One of the most interesting activities, with which we started, was "Speed Networking" where people got the opportunity to know one another.

We also discussed how the Network can support the work of each CHW and each

agency. One CHW requested advice on promoting her agency beyond their own neighborhood.

Besides celebrating and networking, we all shared a little of each individual's skills and knowledge. I think it was needed, because this way, we all know where to go and who to ask for help when we need it.

For this year, we will continue working together, to accomplish all our objectives, and to keep growing and learning with the Network.

May 1st March in Chicago

by Doris Mendez, Chicago CHW Local Network Organizer



Thursday, May 1st, the Chicago Community Health Workers Local Network participated with thousands of immigrants and immigrant supporters. This

year's "May Day" celebration came amidst a rising wave of crackdowns, raids, and policies concerning worker verification and education funding.

Chicago, home to a large immigrant community, which predominantly includes people of Mexican and Polish descent, is also home to one of the largest May Day gatherings. People in Chicago marched from Union Park into the heart of downtown, where organizers, activists, politicians and musicians met them.

This year's rally drew a smaller crowd in comparison to years past. A drop in attendance has been attributed to various factors, while some organizers have said that fear of deportation and harassment is what kept many away.

It was very exciting to be there marching to support Amnesty, Justice, and an Equal Life, and demanding respect for all human beings. (as printed from the Chicago Community Health Worker Local Network Quarterly June 2008 Issue)

Sister 2 Sister

- **Sarah Elizabeth Makeda Stokes** was born to PC **Vanessa** & her husband, **Julius Stokes**, on January 17, 2008. Sarah weighed in at 9 lbs and 15 oz. Sarah is now 6 months and exclusively breastfeeding!

- Congratulations to **Debra Gill** and **Natalie Byrd** for passing the CLC exam and receiving their CLC credentials!

- Congratulations to new officers for the Chicago Region Breastfeeding Task Force: Our own **Helen Dimas** will be the new Chair, **Belinda Sayadian** serves as Co-Chair, and **Natalie Byrd** Co-Chairs the PC Enrichment Committee. **Brenda Reyes** continues to serve as Treasurer.

- Best wishes to CHC trained peer counselors on their placements; **Natalie Byrd** at Mile Square Health Center and **Tracy Wilhoite** at Access Community Health Care.

- Congratulations to Atlanta doula, **Erika Ortiz**, on your achievement!

- Best wishes to **Teresa Parker**, PC from Georgia WIC, on her new business venture!

To all the Graduates of our CHC family, we wish you all the best!

Sofia Dimas

Pre-K, granddaughter of Helen Dimas

Sol Dolnick

H.S., son of Rachel Abramson & Bill Dolnick

Meliana Martinez

8th grade, daughter of Wandy Hernandez.

Dara Gill

H.S., daughter of PC Debra & Clifton Gill

My Story

by Vanessa "Vee" Stokes



My Story by
Vanessa "Vee"
Stokes

My name
is Vanessa
Stokes and
I am a peer
counselor and
graduate of
CHC. I have
a son that is 2
years old and
a daughter
who is 6

months. I breastfed my son for 15 months and am currently exclusively breastfeeding my daughter.

I found out about the peer counselor training on the internet. I decided to take the class because I had such a great breastfeeding experience with my son and I wanted to share that experience with other mothers. When I first attended the training, I thought that the trainers were very well educated and I gained a sense of empowerment out of this training from the trainers and speakers. I also learned a lot about myself and how to conduct myself in a professional way. I like the variety of speakers. Charlotte Johnson really stood out for me because of her gentle forcefulness. I also felt more confident at the end of the training.

I feel that the trainers really relayed the message of how important a breastfeeding peer counselor is in our community. I will take all this information and knowledge to help empower women to breastfeed their children which will hopefully empower our communities.

CAN WE TALK???

We are always interested in hearing from you. We invite you to write an article for our newsletter. It doesn't need to be perfect and we can clean it up for you if you want. You can write about the following:

- Training experience
- Your breastfeeding experience (helping another mom or your own!)
- Your experience as a Community Health Worker (Doula, Peer Counselor, CHW)
- A birth you attended
- A personal, family or work accomplishment
- A book or film review
- A poem
- A recipe
- Information or resources you think would be helpful to others
- Organizational news or accomplishments

You can mail, e-mail or even fax your story!
Just send it to:

Chicago Health Connection

Attention - Helen Dimas
954 W. Washington Blvd.
Box 36, 4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60607
312-243-4772 ext. 229
312-243-4792 fax
hdimas@chicagohealthconnection.org



Going Green

by Helen Dimas



Lately, being Green is the trendy thing to do. I realize that many of us have been doing our part for years – recycling papers and bottles. However, since many celebrities have decided to “Go Green”, it has become the “in” thing to do. I hope that like padded shoulders and the big 90’s hair, this too does not become passé.

Recently at a dinner party, someone brought up “Being Green”. I was able to share with my dinner companions that I went green when I chose to breastfeed my first baby and pinned a cloth diaper around his bottom. I just want to say to all you women who breastfeed that you are doing your part and I am proud of you because you are not filling up our landfills with cans and other formula-related debris. I would like to encourage all of you to do more. Recycling can be a family event and will get the little ones excited to participate in something so important. When I tell my granddaughters I love them to the moon, around the stars and back, I want them to be able to look up in the sky and see just how much grandma loves them! Below are a few suggestions you, your family, and friends can do to help your community be greener and healthier!*

- Breastfeed!
- You can still recycle cans and plastics! Your alderman or woman may have blue bags at his/her office for free
- There are 15 recycling centers around Chicago
- Donate those old glasses to the Lion’s Club - Most Walgreen’s have drop boxes
- Some of your aldermen are drop off centers for battery recycling
- Be eco- friendly by setting up a birdbath. If you place a rock inside, it serves as a rest stop for butterflies as well (change standing water often!)
- Use cloth hand towels and table napkins instead of paper products
- Drive less! Use public transportation more!
- Pick up a free copy of “Read Green Live Green” at your Chicago Public Library

** For those of you not in the Chicago area, I would suggest you contact your local government office or go to your town’s website for more information & ideas.*

Calendar Events:

August 29 2008

The Chicago Department of Public Health Breastfeeding Promotion Walk & Celebration Day

at Rainbow Park Beach – 3111 E. 77th St.
Chicago. For more registration information,
please call: (312) 747-9729

September 2008

Chicago Health Connection Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program Training

This 10 week training is for women who have breastfed for at least 3 months and are interested in helping other moms to breastfeed. Space is limited. For more information or to register, please call Helen Dimas at (312) 243-4772 ext. 229.

October 29, 30, 31, 2008

Chicago Health Connection 3rd National Conference Birth, Breastfeeding & Beyond

This 3 day conference features Dr. James McKenna and will be held at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza in Chicago. Registration begins August 4, 2008 ~ Early Bird Registration postmarked by September 26, 2008 is \$195 or \$245 Regular Registration

SAVE THE DATES!

IL State Breastfeeding Conference April 8th & 9th 2009 in Springfield, Illinois

Hartmann & Hale’s Human Lactation Research Conference

**June 4 – 6, 2009 in Amarillo, Texas.
For more info visit www.ibreastfeeding.com**

Chicago Region Breastfeeding Task Force (CRBTF)



All breastfeeding peer counselors and doulas are invited to join Chicago Region Breastfeeding Task Force (CRBTF). The Task Force publishes a directory of breastfeeding services and resources in the Chicago area. One-hour presentations on breastfeeding topics are offered for continuing education credit at least three times a year. In addition, the Task Force advocates for better breastfeeding policies statewide and nationally. Task Force members write letters and provide educational information to positively influence legislators, the media, and consumers. CRBTF also plans different activities for outreach to promote breastfeeding in fun and creative ways. Individual membership is \$10. Group rates are also available. Come join us!

Meetings: 2nd Friday of each month

Time: 9 AM – 11 AM

Place: John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County
1901 W. Harrison • Lower Level Meeting Room #3
Across from the Cafeteria in the Basement • (Location May Vary)

Parking: 1101 S. Hamilton - Cook County Juvenile Center - \$2

Directions: At Damen and Roosevelt, go west on Roosevelt
Turn right (north) on Hamilton. The first building on the right is the Juvenile Center parking garage. A free shuttle bus between Juvenile Center and Cook County buildings leaves every 15 minutes. For more information, call Helen Dimas or Brenda Reyes at (312) 243-4772.

Developing Healthy People 2020: *Opportunity to Share What You Feel is Important for the Communities You Serve*

On April 30, 2008, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) convened a regional meeting (Regions V and VIII) to discuss the development of the framework for Healthy People 2020 Strategic Plan, to begin discussion on the national health goals for the next ten years.

Chicago Health Connection was represented at the meeting which took place at Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago. At the meeting DHHS provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to share their perspectives on the framework that will be used to organize Healthy People 2020 objectives.

Healthy People 2020 will be launched in two phases. The organizing framework, including the vision, mission and overarching goals, will be issued in late 2008 or early 2009. The specific objectives, accompanied by strategies for achieving them, will be launched in 2010.

DHHS is encouraging the public to share their comments and suggestions as part of the collaborative process of building Healthy People 2020. In turn Chicago Health Connection wants to strongly encourage all of our partners and the public to provide DHHS with feedback on various conceptual aspects and proposals for specific elements, including vision, mission, overarching goals, organizing framework, users, and implementation. Please visit the following web-site for additional information and to submit your comments:

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/hp2020/comments/default.asp>

It is essential that you provide feedback and share your insight with DHHS. Please take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to share what you feel is important for the communities you serve.

(Adapted from the healthypeople.gov website)

*(Editor's Note: The Haven Mother's House is a drug treatment facility for mothers. The Haven Mother's House accepts clients from the community, from community corrections, and from the Department of Corrections. The women who enter The Haven Mother's House while pregnant receive Doula support ante partum, during labor and delivery, and up to 18 months postpartum. The women who enter the program postpartum receive Doula support as they transition their baby into their custody and until the baby reaches eighteen months of age. The Harris Haven Doula's are graduates of the Haven program and currently live in recovery. The Doula's have lived the lives our current clients are struggling to leave behind and offer peer support to the women in treatment. The following pieces reflect the Doula and client perspective.)*Client's names have been changed to protect confidentiality*

A Community Doula reflects on being a Doula.

*By Zelena Smyer, Doula
at The Haven Mother's House*

My role as a Doula is to be nurturing to these moms. They come from an addictive lifestyle; these moms have been traumatized and abused. Giving the moms a sense of how it feels to be nurtured, allows them as parents, to be nurturing to their babies. The rewarding part of being a Doula is experiencing the births of these babies and each woman's uniqueness. Each birth is different; no two are alike. The rewards are experiencing the initial acquaintance, building a relationship, and being there through prenatal, labor, delivery, and postpartum. The ultimate reward is to be there to see a newborn crawl to his mommy's breast when it's just a few minutes old. It is wonderful to see the child develop, watching breastfeeding babies, watching babies imitate facial expressions of their mothers, and then watching them develop as they begin crawling, sitting up, walking, and saying their very first words...

I am a Doula! How exciting!

The Haven Mother's House client reflects on her experience with her Doula, Zelena

*By *Anna*

My Doula has probably been the most supportive person in my life. Zelena has been my Doula since I was 2 months pregnant. My son was born on November 5, 2005. His name is Ollie. It has been a struggle for me in this program. I have had to deal with a lot of issues; everything from my eating disorder, to men issues, to regretting my pregnancy, and to being a mom in recovery. This is my first baby so everything hit me as kind of a shock. Zelena was always there to hold my hand and calm my fears. She pushed me to be a good mother even before my baby was born.

The hardest struggle I went through was when my eating disorder got the best of me and I wasn't eating very well. At about 7 1/2 months I stopped gaining weight. At 8 almost 9 months I was losing weight and my baby had stopped growing. I was terrified. Zelena was calm and nurturing. She got me the help I needed to get me to start eating again, which, in turn, gave me a 6 pound, 3 ounce, healthy baby boy. She was always there to make sure I was taking care of myself. Zelena has always been supportive of me and all my decisions; like when I decided that I didn't want drugs during my labor. When everyone was saying I wouldn't make it she was there to say I was strong enough. When it came time she was there to hold my hand cheering me on at 2:00 in the morning.

She has also kept an open relationship with me considering I am an addict and in treatment. I have a lot of trust issues. I have been able to tell her when she has hurt my feelings and she has listened and taken it into consideration. She has always tried her hardest to never break my trust. She has also taught me how to be nurturing, patient, how to give tough love and that someone can actually care about me. She has shown me all this by leading by example.

Zelena is more to me than just a Doula. She is my role model, a mother figure, a hero, and a close trusted friend. She is someone I plan on keeping in Ollie's and my life long after he turns three. We both love her and owe her our lives.

FILM REVIEWS

(Rating based on a scale of 1 to 4 with
☆☆☆☆ (4) being the highest)

The Business of Being Born

Birth is a miracle, a rite of passage, a natural part of life. But birth is also big business.

Compelled to explore the subject after the delivery of her first child, actress Ricki Lake recruits filmmaker Abby Epstein to question the way American women have babies.

The film interlaces intimate birth stories with surprising historical, political and scientific insights and shocking statistics about the current maternity care system. When director Epstein discovers she is pregnant during the making of the film, the journey becomes even more personal.

(Taken from the

www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com/reviews.htm)

Brenda and I went to see this film. It was very eye-opening and we thought very good as well as informative. We also got to meet Ricki Lake! She is a very sweet (and thin) person. We recommend this film to all women who assist in childbirth and/or are considering childbirth even if you have already had the childbirth experience. The film is available through Netflix.

Rating: ☆☆☆

Review by Helen Dimas

Unnatural Causes...

Is inequality making us sick?

This series crisscrosses the country exploring how the social conditions in which Americans are born, live, and work profoundly affect health and longevity, even more than medical care, behaviors, and genes. This four-hour series challenges fundamental beliefs about what makes Americans healthy – or sick – and offers new remedies for an ailing society. For additional information please visit: <http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/>. This Seven-Part Series is available from California Newsreel. DVD copies are sold as a set for educational use only.

ORDERING INFORMATION:

Online using California Newsreel's secure server (www.newsreel.org) By phone: 1-877-811-7495

By fax: 1.802.846.1850

I had an opportunity to view this series on WYCC TV channel 20. The series looks at different causes that may be responsible for making us sick. It opened my eyes to how social conditions, where we live, and where we work can impact our health. I strongly recommend your organization to purchase this series, to open conversations around the needs of the communities we serve.

Rating: ☆☆☆

Review by Brenda Reyes



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