

Natural Times

Peer Counselor and Doula Newsletter

Graduation - PC Class of 2006



Top row l to r, Alison Kosiek, Rashidat Akinbiyi, Crystal Bland Danielle Moore, Christine Biegler, & Rowkeena Ellis. Bottom row, l to r, Julie Caviades, Bertucci Scott, & Kia Cobb. Not shown, Latandra Mahamad.

On November 29, 2006, CHC celebrated the graduation of the PC Class of 2006. The celebration was held at the Greek Islands on Halsted and was well attended. Many of our graduates brought family and friends. Always there to support the new graduates, were past PC graduates. In attendance also were board members, old friends and new friends as well as several agency partners. Representing Stroger Hospital was Charlotte Johnson, from Mile Square Health Center, Mary Monroe & Belinda Sayadian, and from Christopher House, Iris Gonzales. Christine Biegler did a wonderful job acting as Mistress of Ceremony and Rowkeena Ellis added her own brand of style and sincerity to her presentation on the description of the CHC Peer Counselor Program. All of the graduates present reflected on their class and training experiences. The afternoon

was a definite success. The food and ambience were great. You would never have guessed it was raining outside that day! We welcome these graduates into the fold of this network. We thank everyone for coming out to support and welcome these wonderful women who learned not only with their minds but their hearts as well. Also, a big thank you to the CHC staff for always being our rock. Helen & Brenda

If you would like to submit an article or an announcement for the next newsletter you can e-mail it to hdimas@chicagohealthconnection.org, mail it to our office, or even fax it if you'd like.

No Picnic

There will be no picnic this year. If anyone is interested in starting up the picnics again and is interested in setting up a planning or picnic committee, that would be great. If you have an idea about other networking opportunities (it doesn't have to be a picnic), let us hear from you. CHC can support you by giving you a place to meet and work from. If you would like to follow up or have ideas, please call Helen at (312) 243-4772.

A Marvelous Experience

Julie Caviedes, Peer Counselor Graduate



Julie with her son, Giovanni

Hello everyone. My name is Julie Caviedes. I just wanted to say that this class was a marvelous experience for me because I learned a lot of new things that

I had no idea a woman's body was capable to do while breastfeeding a baby. It is an honor for me to become a breastfeeding peer counselor because now I know I will be able to help those mothers that need information about breastfeeding and now I know that I could either help them or answer any questions that they may have for me.

Another thing I wanted to mention: Helen and Brenda were great, very patient, informative, and fun. It was great working with them. Thank you for all your help you were great! I achieved this with your help.

I would definitely refer anyone to take this class. It's worth all the hard work. Last but not least, I owe this to my kids and also to a very special person to me, my sister-in-law Annie Cortez, for always supporting me and always being there for me.

Again I'm honored to be a breastfeeding peer counselor. Thank You All.

The Benefits of Breastfeeding

by Theresa Parker,
CLC -Breastfeeding Peer Counselor, Atlanta, GA

A wonder, a marvel, a worldwide event
A substance flowing from a mother's breast
It must be heaven sent

A perfect food, we all agree
In endless, clean supply
A soother and a comforter
When baby starts to cry

The natural completion of a cycle
It starts after birth
No imitation ever could
Compare to all its worth

To nourish an infant
Putting him up to her breast
A mother will sleep well at night
Knowing she provides the best

A living substance
Changing to whatever baby needs
Always at the right temperature
Whenever a mother feeds

Colostrum, first provided
Which the baby uses best
Changes quickly in a few days
At the baby's own request

Then the love affair develops
Gazing into each other's eyes
A year as passed with health benefits
Reaping numerous supplies

Have you realized the benefits that
breastfeeding supplies?
Ask a mother that breastfeeds a child
And listen to her smile

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Women Supporting Women by Christine Biegler

Seven years ago I gave birth to our first child, Isabelle. In that instant my whole life changed. Obviously, right? But the changes were not just the typical “mommy things” we all have experienced.



I found my passion and calling in those days and weeks after Isabelle's birth. See, she was born early weighing only 3 lbs, 0 oz; she was unable to coordinate her suck, swallow, and breathe reflex. Breastfeeding was an uphill battle. For weeks I pumped for her, fed her through a feeding tube, and attempted to get her to breast. I was very fortunate in those early days; I had the support of a lactation consultant who stayed by my side and encouraged me every step of the way. I went on to breastfeed Isabelle for 13 months and then each of my two boys for 15 months. It was because of the support that I received that I was so successful. I knew immediately before Isabelle ever left the hospital that it would one day be my life's work to support other breastfeeding moms.

Finally, last year I decided it was time to start pursuing that dream. I started with the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training at the Chicago Health Connection. I went into the class being very well versed on all things breastfeeding. After all, I had 43 months of nursing under my bra. What I learned in that class was far more than proper latch, newborn behavior, and pumping techniques. The wealth of information we gained regarding breastfeeding was incredibly valuable, but it was the other aspect of the class that was

priceless and surprising to me.

On that very first day Brenda and Helen welcomed us with open arms. We felt instantly cared for. They soon started connecting the group in a way I never imagined. We were different ages, different backgrounds, and different experiences, with different goals, yet we became like sisters. It was through this that we learned the importance of the counseling portion of the class. We cared deeply for one another and wanted each other to succeed. Interestingly, this is just like we feel toward the moms we meet. A bond was formed and through this bond we learned the importance of our role as a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor.

During the class I learned the unbelievable power of women supporting women. There is nothing else like it. To have someone say, “I've been there” or “I'm here for you” are incredible words to a new mom trying to understand her newborn. Sometimes something as simple as a touch on the hand or a listening ear is all it takes for a mom to feel like she's doing well with her baby. This is our job. While we will teach breastfeeding basics

“I learned the unbelievable power of women supporting women”

and break breastfeeding myths, at the core of our responsibility is to be an encouragement and support to the women we meet so they and their newborns can have a healthy and successful breastfeeding relationship.

I feel blessed and lucky that I will be let into the lives of families during this precious time of life. I am grateful to what I have learned and experienced at the Chicago Health Connection. And I am especially grateful for the knowledge and encouragement I received from Helen and Brenda who are glowing examples of what a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor should be.

Healthy Births for Healthy Communities Retreat

By Ellen Baker, Outreach Worker

Our community health worker retreat was on October 12-13, 2006 in a nice resort in Lisle. It was very relaxing and enjoyable. It was nice to talk and exchange information. I just relaxed, enjoyed the crafts, and the group games. It meant a time to get away from the office, home, the regular day to day things. A time to enjoy some "me" time.

This retreat for me was relaxing and encouraging. The guest speaker was the bomb. What I enjoyed was the unity the retreat had. We worked together in groups. We had to think about the future, what we would do if we owned our own social services, how would it be run. The rooms were comfortable and the back massage was wonderful.

Bountiful Blessing

by Tara Kato, Peer Educator

It was a beautiful sunny August afternoon when my little nephew was born. He was a beautiful 7 lbs. when he was born. It was almost surreal seeing him take shape and form out of his mother's womb. It also reminded me of how special and miraculous life really is. My little nephew was very alert and aware of his surroundings but my proudest moment was holding him for the first time and having his little eyes meet mine. I was even more proud to see him being exclusively breastfed by his mother. All of the things his mom and I discussed during her prenatal period came full circle. I was empowered by this experience of labor and birth and now anticipate being a mother in the future.

This was a relaxing experience and I got to talk to people who were doing the same thing I was doing. We all are trying to make life a little better for our babies so they can have a healthy start and healthy ending. People don't know what's out there to help them but look and you shall find what you need.

Breastfeeding Taskforce's and Coalition's Meetings

All the breastfeeding peer counselors and doulas are invited to join the 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 also offered for continuing education credit at least three meetings 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 to outreach and promote breastfeeding in fun and creative ways.

- Meetings: Are on the 2nd Friday of each month
- Place: John H Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County
1901 W. Harrison
Lower Level Meeting Room #3 (adjacent to the cafeteria)
(Location May Vary)
- Parking: Available at Cook Co. Juvenile Center on 1101 S. Hamilton; \$2
- Directions: Go West on Polk to Damen, Left on Damen to Roosevelt, The first building on the right is the Juvenile Center, A free shuttle bus between Juvenile Center and Cook County buildings leaves every 15 minutes.

For more information you may call Charlotte Johnson at 312-864-0303.

The Pathway to IBCLC for a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

By Kathryn L. Ragland, IBCLC, RLC

The moment I knew being a successful breastfeeding woman could also have credentials, I thought, "I need to achieve this!" Not only was I a successful "breast feeder" through validation from my breastfed sons, the professional world would also acknowledge this otherwise natural validation.

I became a peer counselor through CHC when I received help from a Doula and Peer Counselor. I experienced latch problems with my first son at day 7 and breastfed 18 months. On day 30 I inquired if such a volunteer group exists that help women with breastfeeding problems. Assunta mentioned CHC and kept me in mind. The summer of 2002 she sent me a postcard with CHC's date of peer counselor training. I wanted to volunteer because my goal was to breastfeed my son, and provide support. Working full time, I felt, could lead to early weaning and, to stop breastfeeding to help someone breastfeed was counterproductive. However I did accept a part-time position at TCA-Health, because of the desire and extreme need to help African American women improve breastfeeding success, the flexibility, values and mission of CHC.

The CHC PC training introduced breastfeeding to a different level. Beth, Brenda, Charlotte, Wandy, Rose, Rachel, Lucia and Bertha mentioned IBCLC. They mentioned an alternative pathway, retrieved info from IBCLE and presented it to me. I was overwhelmed at the credentials so put it off a year. The lactation courses and conferences

instilled a desire to become more educated about cranial sensory, CLC training, March of Dimes perinatal conferences, Illinois Dept of Human Services breastfeeding conferences, etc. I always had the option of bringing my Breastfeeding babies to the conferences and meetings, which greatly helped achieve my goals.

Before I knew it I achieved the continuing ed credits needed to qualify for the alternative pathway. Most importantly, I knew I didn't want to stop breastfeeding, wanted to successfully breastfeed again, only longer and not to give a drop of formula to my baby.

Influenced at the 2005 Doula Picnic by Rachel and Beth again, and urged at the Chicago Task force meetings by Charlotte, Kathy Baker, and Michelle Armstead, I decided to take the plunge.

I met the credentials for the alternative pathway for IBCLE in 2005.

Thanks to Charlotte R. Johnson, Barbara Hardin, Assunta Osterholt, Mary Fauls, Rachel Abramson, Beth Isaacs, Brenda Snyder, Brenda Reyes, Michelle Armstead, Debbie Bump, and Brenda Jones, who encouraged me to go for it.

Most importantly, thanks to my family (Mother, In-Laws, Husband, and Sons). I also need to thank myself because I worked hard to achieve my goals – breastfeeding my sons (Caleb for 18 months, and Daniel for 3.3 years – not a drop of formula). Oh by the way, I passed my board in October 2006 to be an Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant.

The Retreat *by Felicia Tiney, Peer Educator*

During my stay at the Marriot Conference Hotel I felt welcome and at home surrounded by friends and co-workers. During our sessions we had plenty to discuss. We talked about the projects, how they're progressing, about things we can do to make them better. Through it all, it was great. Hope we can do it again soon!

Breastfeeding Baby Showers

By Janeen Callum



Hello everyone, my name is Janeen Callum and I am a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor for the Chicago Urban League (4510 S. Michigan Ave.). Here at the Urban League, our Breastfeeding Program offers extensive support to those breastfeeding, and those who desire to or are thinking about breastfeeding.

This support includes breastfeeding classes for men and women, home visits, hospital visits immediately after delivery, and most importantly...follow-up. Sure this is great, but what can you do to reward these moms for choosing to make one of the best decisions of their life for both themselves and their child? Have a Breastfeeding Baby Shower!

Twice a year, the Chicago Urban League has a Breastfeeding Baby Shower for these moms. "What is a Breastfeeding Baby Shower?" You ask. It's all the fun of a regular baby shower with a more powerful purpose. Yes, it is a blessing for women to have the ability to have a baby, but even more a blessing when they

realize the importance of nurturing their child to the fullest and doing something about it.

At our shower we play normal baby shower games like, Don't Say Baby, Baby's First Foods, and Bottle Race. And like a normal shower, we give prizes to the women who win. But uniquely, we eat lots, and lots of food, raffle off gifts like playpens, basinetts, cases of diapers and wipes, and strollers. We also watch video's, and have guest speakers. Our guest speakers come to educate and encourage moms and let them know how important it is to breastfeed and how important it is to tell the world what they know. We have a large Breastfeeding Shower designed cake, and give out gift bags that have a number of items like bibs, clothing, washcloths, lotion, shampoo, etc. to all the moms participating.

At the end of the shower, we have a certificate ceremony for all of our mothers. We also have special awards for those who have been inspired to become peer counselors, and who have actually completed the training at Chicago Health Connection.

It is truly an exciting event and is open to anyone who is interested. I would like to encourage all of the PC's to do something special for their clients. Because the reality is, they are changing lives by something as simple, yet important as breastfeeding.

Community Health Workers

Community health workers (CHWs) are working hard to improve the health of mothers and babies on Chicago's Southside and Westside. Chicago Health Connection is pleased to partner with Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition, The Steans Family Foundation, Westside Association for Community Action, and Westside Health Authority on two initiatives. One program is Closing The Gap, a program to decrease health disparities in two African American communities. The other program is Healthy Births, Healthy Communities, a program focused on access to care and outreach to high risk mothers and babies. Wandy Hernandez, the lead trainer for these two programs, is impressed with the dedication of the peer educators and outreach workers who continue to seek success in spite of the challenges they face everyday. The CHWs have joined our family of peer counselors and doulas and we are pleased to feature their articles in our publication of Natural Times.

Calendar Events

April 3-4, 2007

State Breastfeeding Conference in Springfield, IL. Please call Brenda Snyder for more information at 312-793-1643.

April 13, 2007

Peer Counselor Enrichment. For more information please call Charlotte Johnson at 312-864-0303

May 6, 2007

Chicago Health Connection Fundraising Event: Nurturing Excellence at The Four Seasons. Tickets are \$100. Please contact Aparanji Mirtipati at 312-243-4772 ext 228.

July 20-23, 2007

La Leche League International 50th Anniversary Conference at The Hilton Chicago. For more information visit www.lalecheleague.org.

TBA - Summer CHC Birth Doula Training

There will be a training this summer 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.

Naming Contest

We are thinking about changing the name of our newsletter to something that describes who we are and/or what we do. We would love to hear from you and get your opinion. If you have any great ideas and would like to submit your name change, or you think it is fine the way it is, let us know. You can fax your opinion or suggestions to Helen at (312) 243-4792 or call (312) 243-4772 or you can e-mail me as well at hdimas@chicagohealthconnection.org

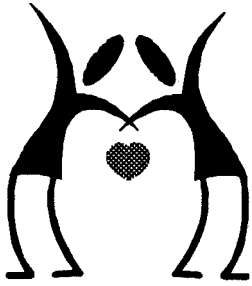
Illinois State Breastfeeding Task Force

The Illinois State Breastfeeding Task Force brings together breastfeeding advocates from all over Illinois to discuss issues and activities relevant to breastfeeding promotion activities. Promotional activities, such as regional activities to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week and Illinois Breastfeeding Month; Breastfeeding Conferences, media activities, and special projects which feature collaboration with physicians/hospitals are shared. The Illinois State Breastfeeding Task Force also serves as an expert advisory committee for the development and/or review of breastfeeding education materials.

This year, the group has decided to focus on how Grandmothers do or do not support the infant feeding decisions of their daughters, daughters-in-law or granddaughters. On January 16, 2007, a mock "Grandmother's Tea" will be held. During the tea, the task force will explore how the group will package this activity and share this information with other breastfeeding advocacy groups, task forces and coalitions throughout the state.

All breastfeeding advocates are invited to participate in the State Breastfeeding Task Force meetings. The meetings are from 10:00 am – 3:00 PM and are held in Springfield. Meetings are available by conference call. 2007 meetings will be held on April 17, July 17 and October 16. For additional information, please contact Brenda Snyder at Brenda.Snyder@illinois.gov.

Sister to Sister Announcements



Congratulations to Kathy Ragland for becoming a Board Certified Lactation Consultant.

Congratulations to Bertucci Scott on the birth of her baby Odello Scott. Born on

November 15th, weighing 7lbs. and 1oz. and breastfeeding!

We would also like to extend congrats to Amy Patel on the birth of her son Narayan Patel born on August 17th, 2006. Amy serves as a board member at CHC.

A big shout out to Brenda and Alfredo Reyes who welcomed Sofia as she joins big brothers David and Alfredo Jr. Little Sofia was born on January 11, 2007 and weighed 7lbs.5oz.

Good work Loretha Weisinger! She was recently interviewed by WBEZ radio to discuss her role of a community-based doula. Way to promote the good work of doulas!

Lucia Pelayo Robles has received her R.N. You go girl!

Congratulations to Lawon Tidwell on her new position at the Friend Family Health Center/UOC.



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