For twenty-five years
the power of one birth...
Dear Friends,

Watching your baby grow is one of the most satisfying of human experiences. My children have always known that HealthConnect One is my baby too – and just like them, this baby has grown beautifully. Over twenty-five years, through two name changes and during times of tremendous expansion, HealthConnect One has been consistent in its mission. The peer-to-peer model is our core: community health workers are our heart. You will see in the pages which follow that these local leaders are now taking the national stage. Their experience as community-based doulas and breastfeeding peer counselors gives them the skills and the leadership to make a difference in this historic moment for maternal and child health.

The United States spends more than any other country on health care, yet does not achieve better health outcomes. HC One is poised to catch the rising tide of interest in the role community health workers can play to combat the huge and unforgivable health disparities that exist in the U.S.

This distance between someone in need and the care they require can sometimes seem insurmountable. But community health workers are there, providing one-on-one support, and helping underserved communities navigate America’s complex health care environment.

HealthConnect One is proud to affect broad policy recommendations by amplifying voices often left unheard – in particular, the important voices of community health workers. One by one, we find answers. One community by one community, we help develop strategy. For twenty-five years, the power of one birth – again and again – has been our strength. We look forward to twenty-five years more, with your support.

Sincerely,

Rachel Abramson
Executive Director

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Dear Friends,

I am both honored and humbled to share HealthConnect One’s 25th Anniversary Celebration with you! I have been part of the HC One family as a breastfeeding peer counselor participant, a Board Member, Board President, supporter and friend.

In 25 years, HealthConnect One has served over 7,000 families, created jobs for thousands of community health workers – both breastfeeding peer counselors and community-based doulas, and supported thousands of healthier births in Chicago and across the country.

These past few years, we have even engaged with women in Chile and Japan. Yet our model – one trained woman supporting one pregnant woman during that critical time from pregnancy through early parenting – has remained the same.

Across the country, hundreds of dedicated women and men are becoming community health workers. And—the incredible thing—we’ve found the funding to embrace this change the right way: one partnership and one woman at a time. By insisting on bottom-up program creation and long-term sustainability, HC One is creating a model capable of improving birth outcomes in an incredibly wide range of at-risk communities.

I am continually impressed with HC One and look forward to celebrating 25 years of growth, success and change.

Sincerely,

Gaylean Woods
25th Anniversary Chair

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Gaylean Woods
25th Anniversary Chair
In 1986, the Chicago Breastfeeding Task Force was born. Twenty-five years later, our baby has grown into HealthConnect One, a national agency dedicated to supporting new mothers, babies and families during pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and early parenting, in some of the nation's most underserved communities.
What is remarkable about HealthConnect One’s story is how little we have changed.

• **OUR VISION** is still a world where all families are supported throughout the birth process by a web of community-based care, regardless of income.

• **OUR WORK** is still the same: peer support and community leadership, to develop programs, partnerships and systems change based on the strengths and vision of each community.

• **OUR STRATEGY** is still driven by the extraordinary health benefits (better birth weight, more breastfeeding, less obesity, fewer c-sections) generated when ONE trained community health worker (breastfeeding peer counselor or doula) supports ONE pregnant woman in her community.

• **OUR CHALLENGE**, unfortunately, has also remained steady: The United States has almost 20,000 newborn deaths each year, ranking 41st globally – worse than rates of the Czech Republic, Malaysia and Cuba. [Source: World Health Organization, 2011]

Throughout our 25 years, even as we’ve dramatically expanded our scope and reach, HealthConnect One has kept its focus on one-to-one connections.

**Our story is also about trust.**

Along the way, we’ve listened…

• When our breastfeeding peer counselors wanted to give more comprehensive support to new families, HealthConnect One explored the doula model, based it in our communities, and supported its growth.

• Then, when our community-based doulas and program supervisors expressed frustration about the funding necessary to sustain their innovative, life-changing programs, we ramped up our advocacy work and secured federal funding for community-based doula programs.

• When local community health workers came looking for a sponsor for a much-needed network, we became the sponsor for the Chicago Community Health Worker Local Network, which is making great strides in building the field for CHWs in Chicago.

While so much about HealthConnect One has remained consistent for 25 years, so much, too, has changed. This has been a powerful year.

1987: The Chicago Breastfeeding Task Force offers its first Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Training, which by 1990 evolves into trainings across the Chicagoland area, and a pilot program with Illinois WIC.


2000: CHC completes a four-year pilot of the Chicago Doula Project, and begins replication in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
In 2010-2011, HealthConnect One gained tremendous momentum, launching a new statewide breastfeeding initiative, and gathering deeper recognition and respect for our community-based doula model nationally.

“The process of developing the Illinois Breastfeeding Blueprint is typical of HC One. We began by convening a wide range of stakeholders – moms who did and did not breastfeed, physicians, nurses, community health workers, researchers – who together shared and assessed strengths, needs, and desire for action. Then we crunched the numbers, pieced together the stories, and came back to each group with the data, to ask: Is this right? Are we hearing you? Does this make sense?”

Sadie Wych, HC One Project Coordinator
What is remarkable about HealthConnect One’s story is how much we have changed.

While our vision, work and strategy remain steady, our growth has been exponential. Over the past 25 years, HealthConnect One has transformed from a direct-service agency supporting new families to an organization committed to training trainers, building the capacity of local advocates to gather community support, and guiding the development of new and sustainable programs. Just a few of our accomplishments during the past year include:

Expanding One Model: Community Based Doula

As of October 2011, we work closely with 44 existing community-based doula sites in 16 states. Including sites currently in development, our model is affecting change in 82 communities in 28 states. Nine of these sites are piloting our online Doula Data system.

Promoting One Message: Support Breastfeeding Moms

HC One led the charge to create the Illinois Breastfeeding Blueprint, a strategic, research-based plan for increasing breastfeeding rates and decreasing disparities in the state of Illinois. The Blueprint, developed collaboratively with the Illinois Department of Human Services and the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, launched in April of 2011 and has already begun to spark change in hospital practices and statewide policy.

To read the full report or to learn about current Blueprint-related activities, please visit www.ilbreastfeedingblueprint.org.

Speaking with One Voice: Advocacy to Sustain Community-based Practices

• We secured new federal funding this year to sustain our work as the Community-based Doula Leadership Institute, which involves building support for our model, and training and mentoring six sites in Georgia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin.

• Deepening relationships with federal officials spurred us for the first time to host our National Conference in Washington, DC, and combine it with Advocacy Day. In March 2011, “Birth, Breastfeeding and Beyond: Sustaining Community-Based Practices” effectively advanced our message and provided the motivation, collaboration and support for community-based practitioners to hold critical face-to-face meetings with legislators and government leaders.

2004: CHC develops and mobilizes the Community-Based Doula Advocacy Network, now a vibrant Network over 400 members strong.

2005 and 2006: The Kindling Group films and produces A Doula Story, a documentary following CHC-trained doula Loretha Weisinger. Shown on 43 PBS stations, her story touches many hearts. Zero to Three Press publishes The Community-Based Doula: Supporting Families Before, During and After Childbirth, a result of collaboration among CHC staff and supporters.

2007: The Chicago Community Health Workers Local Network receives its first funding and CHC becomes the Network’s fiscal agent and mentor.
Local Leaders Take National Stage

Inspiriting individuals move this work forward one by one, day by day, expanding their wisdom, their talent, their skills and their reach.

“HealthConnect One helped me become more confident about promoting breastfeeding in the community. I was able to bond with the other women. I was able to relate to the women of HealthConnect One in a way I never thought I would. I learned how to be affirmative and approachable. I feel that HealthConnect One has helped me grow as a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor and a breastfeeding mother.”

Brittany Fells-Robinson, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Class of 2009

2008: The very first federal funding stream dedicated to community-based doula programs is established after years of tireless advocacy by HC One’s National Doula Advocacy Network. Awards are made via a competitive grants process through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).
Here are just a few of our local leaders.

**Wandy Hernandez, HC One Program Director**, began working with Alivio Medical Center in 1993, promoting breastfeeding in their waiting room. Soon, she became a community-based doula and eventually trained community-based doulas on behalf of HC One. Every day now, she mentors and supports community-based doulas and other Community Health Workers (CHWs) in relating to clients, interpreting policy, and gathering any continuing education necessary to sustain their agencies’ CHW programs. In 2011, she was voted in as Chair-Elect for the CHW Section of the American Public Health Association.

**Loretha Weisinger, a community-based doula from the original Chicago pilot** in the late ‘90s, was later featured in the documentary, *A Doula Story: On the Front Lines of Teen Pregnancy*. Moved by the film and the power of doulas, Nurse Midwife Rieko Kishi invited Loretha to Japan to speak about the impact of community-based doulas on new families and to support efforts to spread the doula model there. Now, while continuing as a doula for new families on the west side of Chicago, Loretha is part of a team helping policymakers, program administrators and researchers find the words to describe what makes this model so successful.

**Laura Bahena, Chicago Community Health Worker (CHW) Local Network Coordinator** worked for years advocating with and for people with disabilities, and over time, she added other health topics to her repertoire – including poison prevention and breast cancer. She joined the Chicago CHW Local Network in 2008, helping to shape their vision, expand their membership base, and solidify partnerships throughout Illinois. A year later, she took a leap of faith and joined the HC One team as Network Coordinator and now in 2011 serves as co-chair for the National Steering Committee for Promotores de Salud, established by the U.S. DHHS Office of Minority Health as part of the Affordable Care Act.

**Hanifah Rios first learned about HC One from her midwife.** In 2001, she participated in HC One’s first community-based doula training in Atlanta, and soon joined Families First as a bilingual family support worker, providing support services to first time mothers. When the Georgia Campaign Against Pregnancy Prevention (G-CAPP) solicited Families First to manage the Atlanta Community-Based Doula Project, Hanifah began her own campaign to become the doulas’ Doula. Now in 2011, Hanifah serves as Program Manager.

When she was first asked to call her Representatives in 2006 and talk about program outcomes, she felt uncertain. She wasn’t the only one. Legislative advocacy was new for most of the community-based doulas in HealthConnect One’s network. Hanifah continued to listen. She stayed connected to community-based doulas in other states through HC One’s network and ultimately realized that if she didn’t tell her story, no one would hear it. She picked up the phone. She began sending emails to her Representatives. She became an advocate, one story at a time. “People often judge teen moms harshly,” she explains, and her goal with each story, or each conversation, is to “bring them to life so people can see them not as pregnant teens, but as young women who would soon become mothers, mothers who need the same support, even more, as any new mother would.”

“That intimidation phase doesn’t always go away… my hands may get sweaty, my body temperature may rise, but I still push forward. These people are not superhuman folks. They’re human folks. They’re supposed to be representing us and they can’t do that if we don’t start sharing our stories.”

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**2008:** Having worked outside the boundaries of Chicago for years, Chicago Health Connection changes its name to HealthConnect One.

**2010:** HC One begins a series of community forums on breastfeeding, engaging breastfeeding advocates at all levels – new moms, seasoned program staff, physicians, and everyone in between – leading to the development of an Illinois Breastfeeding Blueprint, launched in Spring 2011.

**2011:** HC One supports 44 community-based doula replication sites in 16 states, with more than 39 community sites in various stages of preparation or replication. Doula Data is piloted by 9 of these replication sites.
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Georgia Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program
Illinois Department of Human Services
Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago (PHIMC) - Communities Putting Prevention to Work Initiative
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA),
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women’s Health, Region V

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Alfredo Lopez, CHW Local Network Organizer

Please visit www.healthconnectone.org to view HC One’s Consultants and Associate Board members.
Financials

In 1988, just two years after the Chicago Breastfeeding Task Force was established, Board Members and staff planned a Benefit that raised over $1,000. Today, in 2011, with a budget of over $1,000,000, we are so pleased that most of the individuals attending our first fundraiser are still giving their time and financial support to HealthConnect One!

Fiscal Year 2011

In 25 years, HealthConnect One has become a $1.3 Million national organization. In FY2011, we not only raised more money than ever before, but we diversified our sources of funding and decreased overhead costs, allocating more revenue directly to programs.

**July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011: $1,356,976**

### Sources of Funding

- Foundation: 39%
- Corporate: 1%
- Individual: 4%
- Government: 42%
- Fee for Service: 9%
- Other/In-Kind: 5%

### How Funds were Used

- Program: 86%
- Management: 4%
- Fundraising: 10%
One Birth... that led to thousands of healthy births