

Mothers and midwives

By Jane Whiting

It's probably no coincidence that the International Day of Midwives on May 5 is very close to Mother's Day on May 11. After all, childbirth and motherhood are intimately linked together!

As a mother of four, Mary Beatty has a very strong and personal connection with childbirth and midwifery. All of her young children, three girls and a boy, have been born under the care of midwives at the Midwifery Group of Ottawa and Beatty is a dedicated volunteer with Consumers Supporting Midwifery Care of Ottawa.

"I participate in this group as a volunteer to support the necessity for midwifery care in Ottawa, and also as a form of 'thanks' to my amazing midwives, dating inclusively from 2001-2007," says Beatty.

"They have forever changed, and enhanced my life, and that of my family's. Not only did they inform, educate, care for, empower, listen, support and provide excellent care throughout my four pregnancies, labours, and deliveries (plus one miscarriage), and all of my post-partum care, they did so with such a professional, informed, knowledgeable and confident, yet laid-back, manner."

Beatty, who had three home births and one at hospital, all with the exclusive assistance of midwives, is currently on maternity leave and wants to use this time to spread the word about the many choices and benefits that midwifery care offers. "I love the Midwives, and I will continue to support them, by helping to educate and inform others, who may be interested in learning about all of their pregnancy options, as taxpayers, here in Ottawa."

Consumers Supporting Midwifery Care of Ottawa is a grassroots organization that works to ensure that women in the region have greater access to midwifery care for their births and advocates for increasing the number of midwives in the Queensway-Carleton and Ottawa Hospitals. Their goal is for midwives to have privileges in all of the local hospitals, so that families will feel more secure and comfortable, knowing that all hospitals will serve them and their midwives during childbirth, whether they are planned at home or in hospital.

Beatty helps to organize and coordinate monthly Midwifery Information sessions, to inform local families, individuals and couples, who wish to explore midwifery as a healthcare option, for pregnancy, birth and

post-partum care. The sessions last about an hour with presentations by midwives and families sharing their experiences. Usually they are attended by people from diverse backgrounds with first-time mothers-to-be and women who have had children delivered by physicians.

“Increasingly, it’s getting harder for families to find family doctors and obstetricians to deliver babies, especially with more retirements over the next five years,” explains Beatty. “Many are looking for more personalized care with hour-long appointments, rather than 10 to 15 minutes in a doctor’s office. They want to involve the whole family in the process and have the choice of a hospital or home delivery and make informed decisions about using pain medication during labour.”

Studies show that about eight percent of births in Ontario are cared for by midwives and report that it reduces the use of interventions such as forceps, vacuum and epidurals. Around 70 to 85 percent of women have low-risk pregnancies, and are considered good candidates for midwifery care. The main reasons for choosing a midwife include having the option of a home or hospital delivery, making informed decisions and having continuity of care before, during and after the birth.

The next information session is on April 29 at the Western Community Centre in Kanata and again on May 22 from 7 to 8 p.m. at Canadian Mothercraft of Ottawa-Carleton at 475 Evered Av., Ottawa. Further information on the Association of Ontario Midwives website at: www.aom.on.ca.

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