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[doula services]

## The Story of my path to birth



I began studying to be a childbirth educator in Hawaii in 1994, shortly after the birth of my first son. I was taken with the whole experience and knew I could make a

difference in whether or not the experience was the best it could be for parents. I attended a Childbirth Educator training in Salt Lake City and worked and studied until I passed the test for certification from AAHCC in 1995. I taught two classes before I longed to break free of the parameters that the organization put on me. I wanted moms to know *everything* that could possibly make their experience positive, not just *one* method that worked for *some* people.

In an effort to further support mothers, I attended an ALACE (Association of Labor Assistants and Childbirth Educators) Labor Assistant training when I was pregnant with my second, in San Diego, California, and there gained a wealth of knowledge. I was fascinated and wanted to start attending births as soon as possible. I began frequenting childbirth community groups around the San Diego area and it was at one of these I learned of another labor support training put on by an organization called, "DONA." At the time it stood for *Doulas of North America*. The name has now changed to just *DONA International* since the popularity of

doulas has spread like wildfire throughout the world.

The training was held just weeks after my baby girl was born, but I made a deal with the teacher to let me bring her because I knew this was the work I was put on this earth to do. I was fascinated to learn even more about the stages of labor and birth, the emotional needs and support of birthing women, epidurals, cesarean section, breastfeeding, massage, counterpressure, hydrotherapy, acupressure, partner support and facilitation, newborn baby care and more! I couldn't believe everything that went into helping a mother get the best experience possible.

I was thrilled with the mission of the DONA organization and decided to pursue an international certification with them. After completing the rigorous certification process, I became certified as a doula in 1997 and earned the credential of CD(DONA).

During this time, I also developed a childbirth education curriculum with the help of a labor and delivery nurse and midwife, one I felt truly met the needs of women and their partners. I finally felt like I was giving them the whole tool belt instead of just the wrench, so to speak.

I also began my private doula practice in that same year (1997) and soon became known to many of

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the doctors and midwives in the area. One very busy midwives' practice in American Fork billed my birth classes as Eclectic Childbirth Classes (because I taught everything, not just one method) and they kept my classes and my doula practice very full with their referrals. I remember a doctor asking me to come into another room with him after a birth we had both attended and I was so scared because I thought he was going to reprimand me for something that happened in the birth. Instead he suddenly said, "Would you tell me what you think I could do to be a better OB?" I had another doctor ask me to teach him how to do the knee press when he saw how much it helped his laboring patient. He later asked me to teach my classes at his OB clinic. I felt honored to be talked to as a peer and started to truly feel part of the birth team. I was so happy to be gaining respect in the childbirth field because it meant I could help more and more women.

In 1999, shortly after becoming pregnant with my third baby, I began working at the DONA Central Office which happened to be located near where I was living. I had the pleasure to work alongside Kristi Ridd Young, the only DONA Approved Doula Trainer in our state at the time. I loved answering phone questions and emails from doulas and doula clients from all over the world, and I was fascinated with Kristi and her wealth of knowledge. She inspired me to want to be a doula trainer, as well, so in 2001, I headed to Wisconsin and took a Doula

Trainer's Training from the world renowned Penny Simkin. I worked for months, developing and honing my curriculum and in 2002 was finally awarded with the designation of DONA Approved Birth Doula Trainer and the credential, BDT(DONA). I taught my first workshop that same year and have since trained hundreds of women to be doulas.

I continued to attend births and teach trainings and in 2006, began thinking about becoming a midwife and even started some self study at home and with midwifery study groups. We studied about RH factor, placental abnormalities, suturing, complications of pregnancy, nutrition in pregnancy and much more.

In 2011, I was asked by midwife and psychotherapist, Tara Tulley, to join her in starting a midwifery school and what started out as a small group, meeting informally on couches in her home, has now blossomed into a full fledged midwifery trade school called, The Community School of Midwifery where, yes, I'm an owner and teacher, but also a second year student hoping to earn my midwifery certificate by late 2016. I developed and teach a Childbirth Educator Certification course for our students and am the Doula Workshop teacher, as well as being part of the faculty staff teaching pregnancy nutrition and sexuality classes.

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In 2013, I was brought on as a partner in The Community Health Clinic, which is a business that specializes in treating and supporting women and their families through Perinatal and Postpartum Mood Disorders. In addition to working as a liaison with health professionals to get their clients the help they need, I occasionally act as a support person for the therapists who run our support groups.

In 2011, I took a break from everything to have my last baby. Despite great nutrition, I developed preeclampsia that went undiagnosed by my care provider and had quite the scare with my birth. That event was the catalyst for learning everything I could about preeclampsia and stress in pregnancy and now I speak regularly to professional organizations about both topics.

In 2014, I began taking doula clients again, since I can never stay away from this work for too long, and am happy to say that I can't imagine a more rewarding career.

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