

Protestors support midwife

Woman pleads not guilty to practicing without license

By PAIGE E. WASSEL
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More than 50 people rallied outside the Shelby County Courthouse in Shelbyville Friday morning to show support for a woman accused of helping with a home birth without the proper credentials.

Jennifer Louisa Williams, 54, pleaded not guilty at an initial hearing to charges of practicing medicine without a license and engaging in an unlicensed practice of midwifery.

The Bloomington midwife assisted an Edinburgh couple with their home birth in June.

The baby died less than two hours after birth, but the charges are not related to the baby's death.

The grass-roots group meeting outside the courthouse, called Friends of Jennifer Williams, was there not only to show support for Williams but also to raise awareness of the midwife profession in Indiana.

Supporters want to let people know that home birth is a safe, effective alternative to hospital birth when it's done by a qualified person, Indianapolis member Sara Spalding said.

The group is also raising awareness about a bill that would establish a board and qualifications for certified, professional midwives.

Current state law requires that a midwife be a registered nurse and a graduate of a state-approved school of midwifery and pass a state licensing exam.

Spalding said the bill has been around for more than a decade in one form or another but has failed to pass both houses of the Indiana General Assembly.

Williams is a certified professional midwife with the North American Registry of Midwives but is not listed as a licensed nurse or midwife by state licensing boards.

Members are passionate about defending the practice of midwifery because of the good experiences that many have with home birth, Spalding said.

"It's just something that people really feel so strongly about because it is so personal," Spalding said.

Members of the group, who were mainly from central Indiana, contacted each other through e-mail, online message boards and word of mouth, she said.

About 15 to 20 members of the rallying group also sat in the courtroom to show support, according to chief deputy prosecutor Brad Landwerlen, who is prosecuting the case.

"It's rare that you have (a case) that touches a particular group like this and have a small organization of people who have the time to travel and protest," Landwerlen said.

The next hearing on the case is set for 9 a.m. March 10 in Superior Court 1.

Connecting the dots

Greenwood woman translates text for the blind

By MICHAEL W. HOSKINS
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Her fingers dance across six typewriter keys to produce a series of raised dots on a thick piece of manila paper.

A poetry book stands open nearby as Harriett Whitson types away, her eyes fixed on lines of poetry as she copies them to a page for others to read.

Whitson can see what she has typed, but those reading her work cannot.

The 87-year-old Greenwood woman is a Braille transcriber, certified by the Library of Congress to produce literature using a specialty alphabet system for the blind to read with their fingers.

"I've been doing this for 35 years, and I'm still fascinated by how this is devised," Whitson said. "There is so much need for this, although everything is more computerized now."

Her work has included poetry, knitting guides, law reviews and microwave instructions. The most-loved pieces she transcribes are recipe books, restaurant menus and football books or magazines.

"Whatever people want to read, that's what I do," Whitson said, pointing out that she mostly does work for friends in the Indianapolis area or referrals from blind schools.

Her work for blind readers began in the early 1970s. A friend suggested the idea to her, and she thought it would be an interesting undertaking, especially since she had worn out her thumbs by knitting.

"I had no idea what I was getting into," she said. "It can be like learning a foreign language, discouraging when you don't know the rules but rewarding when you can read and write and help someone understand."

Whitson started studying a course book and style manuals from the Library of Congress for a year, learning the grammar and punctuation rules and letters.

All Braille letters, words and numbers are made up of six dots, with three rows down and two columns. Whitson compares each character, or cell, to a muffin pan or half an egg carton as a model.

On the left are dots 1, 2 and 3; dots 4, 5 and 6 are on the right. Combinations of dots create punctuation, numbers and letters.

For example, one dot on the top left means the letter A. Two dots on top of each other in the left column create the letter B. A full cell of six dots translates to the word "for."



Harriett Whitson reads over some of the items she transcribed using her Perkins Braille. Whitson recently received the Community Quarterback award from the Indianapolis Colts for her work.

"It's where (the dots) are placed that's interesting," she said. "Much of it is like shorthand."

Whitson's first test for certification by the Library of Congress was part of a book of her choice: "Alive and Kicking," the autobiography of George Blanda of football's Oakland Raiders.

"If I was going to do this, I'd want to do something I love," Whitson said. "And that would be football."

The library graded her at 86 percent, according to her May 14, 1973, certification letter.

"I only did 42 pages, but because there were so few sports books (transcribed) at the time, I ended up doing the whole thing," she said.

Ever since, she has been transforming pages for the National Braille Association, Indiana School for the Blind and referrals from people she has met and done work for.

For example, one woman she has done books for is a Purdue graduate who, despite her blindness, has raised five children and baby-sat for children who can see, Whitson said.

All the needed equipment fits on her dining room table inside her apartment at Greenwood Village South retirement community, where she has lived for nearly six years.

She uses a six-key typewriter called Perkins Braille, named after Louis Braille who developed the specialized alphabet

system in the 1820s.

Whitson spends about an hour a day copying about five or six pages of text. A ding sounds every time she hears the end of a line, when there are seven characters left to type.

She can't use her fingers to read what she has transcribed; instead, she proofs every symbol by sight.

"I can't feel the letters with my fingers," Whitson said. "You have to be so sensitive feel them."

When Whitson makes a mistake and needs to fix the page, she uses a metal eraser to mash down the dot.

Her only charge is \$20 to help pay for the paper, Whitson said.

Postage is prepaid, and she always writes "Free matter for the blind" on the envelope before returning it, she said.

"I just love being busy, and doing this is one way I can help people who need it," she said.

Whitson's work for blind readers won her recognition from the Indianapolis Colts, who selected the season-ticket holder as one of four Greenwood residents to receive a community service award called the Community Quarterback award.

Her son, Bob, a teacher at Greenwood Community High School, nominated her for Braille transcribing, volunteering for Meals on Wheels and alphabetizing files at the cancer care area of St. Francis Hospital on the south side of Indianapolis.

BRILLE ALPHABET

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H
- I
- J
- K
- L
- M
- N
- O
- P
- Q
- R
- S
- T
- U
- ~••••••••••• V
- ~••••••••••~ W
- ~••••••••••~• X
- ~••••••••••~•• Y
- ~••••••••••~••• Z

Those pressed for time opt for faster, better food to go

By MICHAEL W. HOSKINS
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Dustin Ruff of Greenwood picks up his carry-out order from Applebee's in White River Township on Thursday.

Cooking a meal at home or dining out at a local restaurant sometimes takes too long for one Center Grove family.

But the Ruff family can still enjoy salads, burgers and fries or their favorite chicken dishes without standing in line or firing up the kitchen stove.

And they can still make time to take their daughters to a school roller skating party in Franklin.

"Instead of having to go home, make a meal and get everyone to get together, it's quick and simple to pick up a meal on the go," Dustin Ruff said. "We have more time for taking care of other things."

Getting restaurant food to go is

becoming more popular across the country as busy families look for quicker ways to get meals instead of home-cooking and dining out.

Traditional sit-down restaurants are turning to takeout and making it easier for customers to enjoy

their favorite steaks, hamburgers or pasta dishes in their homes.

Takeout areas, which once were just small areas at the bar or cash register, have been getting more space, including parking spots for curbside pickup and large banners advertising carry-out service.

More restaurants are also allowing customers to sidestep lines or telephones by browsing menus and ordering online.

All offer the same advantages: no waiting in lines for a table, quick-access to food someone else made and not having to clean up kitchens.

"Greenwood is a killer area for restaurants, and takeout has really taken off," said Troy Thayer, general manager at Johnny Carino's on U.S. 31 across from Greenwood Park Mall. "Restaurants will

always adapt and change with the needs of customers, and right now we have to make it as convenient as possible."

The Italian restaurant opened in August and has offered curbside service for takeout orders from the beginning, Thayer said. Takeouts account for 4 to 12 percent of total sales, he said.

At Applebee's in White River Township, takeout accounts for 10 to 15 percent, manager Jimmy Jackson said.

"We have a lot of soccer moms who are coming to and from practice," he said. "They have kids in the backseat, and they just don't want to cook at home."

The restaurant opened at State Road 135 and Smith Valley Road in June and was the first restaurant in the area to offer curbside to go service, Jackson said.

Four parking spots are designated for people to park, pickup and pay for food on the building's north side.

People call in food in advance and let the restaurant know what kind of vehicle they are driving, Jackson said.

Two employees stay at the counter to monitor and deliver orders, which range from 30 to 50 a night during the week and even more on weekends.

Most popular to-go orders include salads and the crispy orange chicken, the wait staff said.

On Thursday, Ruff's wife called in a carry-out order about 5 p.m., when he was leaving work in Indianapolis. He picked the food up about 30 minutes later.

The family dines out about once a week but gets takeout food more regularly from Bob Evans

and Applebee's, Ruff said.

"(The) food is better for you; it's not fast-food," he said. "Everyone can get food that they like, and there's more time to take care of other things, like getting ready for games."

Another motorist picking up her food in the car was Angela Morris of White River Township, who works at Community Hospital South in Indianapolis.

"I've just worked three nights in a row and don't want to cook," she said.

Morris pulled up and picked up an order of chicken fingers, chicken and cheese pizza for her 3-year-old son.

"This is better because I don't have to get out of the car or wait in any lines," she said. "But it's still a full meal and not just fast-food."

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