

Doulas lend support to mothers before, after births

By JENNIFER L. BOEN
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When Jordan Saalfrank moved to Fort Wayne from New York six years ago, she was pregnant and looking forward to finding a birth doula to assist her.

A doula offers physical, emotional and informational support to families throughout pregnancy, labor, delivery and postpartum. Some work only as birth doulas, others as postpartum doulas. Some doulas are both.

"They do nothing medical, but walk alongside the health-care professionals to support the family and reassure while offering professional insight and comfort measures," said Saalfrank, who has a master's degree in social work and received her doula certification from Doulas of North America, or DONA.

In New York and other metropolitan areas, doulas are commonly used, but Saalfrank discovered such was not the case in northeast Indiana.

That spurred her to get certified as a doula and network with other women



Doula Jordan Saalfrank, left, talks with new parent Brienne Stark as she holds Stark's baby, Mary Isabella. During the postpartum meeting in Fort Wayne, Stark is showing Saalfrank how Mary Isabella likes to hold her arms.

who had or were getting training.

She and nine other doulas in northeast Indiana began meeting last summer to discuss the best way to relay information to the region. They recently formed the Doula Network of Fort Wayne, which

now has a Web site, printed information and other resources for families considering using a doula.

"We're really big about choices," Saalfrank said.

Doulas make one or more prenatal

home visits, assist throughout the labor and birth and visit the family in their home after the birth. A postpartum doula may offer breast-feeding assistance and even do housework.

Though Saalfrank could not say whether the profession was limited to women, the word is Greek in origin and means "woman's servant."

Brienne Stark, a nurse, had read about doulas in numerous books on pregnancy.

"I didn't want an epidural and wanted to have someone with me throughout the labor and delivery," she said.

Epidurals are the most common form of regionalized anesthesia used in births today. So when she was about 20 weeks pregnant with new daughter Mary Isabella, "I Googled doulas and Fort Wayne and Jordan's name came up," she said.

Clint Stark, who is in his final year of pastoral training at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, wasn't convinced the couple needed a doula. He assumed he could attend to his wife's needs during labor and after.

Although there were no complications with Mary's birth, and the labor was not pro-

longed, looking back he said, "I don't know how we'd have done it without Jordan."

He and Saalfrank took turns using acupressure to relieve his wife's pain. Saalfrank showed him other ways to assist his laboring wife, including applying pressure on the outside of the hips.

Nurses were busy attending to other laboring moms and unable to remain at Brienne Stark's side the entire time. The doctor wasn't expected to arrive until the birth was imminent.

As it turned out, the doctor didn't make it before Mary was born, so a nurse caught the baby.

"We were especially glad then we had a doula," Clint Stark said.

While Indiana does not require doulas to be certified, the Starks say it is something they will look for in any doula they might hire for a subsequent birth.

Fort Wayne-area doulas charge \$350 to \$500, depending on the extent of their role. In New York, the going rate is about \$1,800, Saalfrank said.

The Starks said their obstetrician supported their decisions to hire a doula.

"Some doctors really don't know what we do," Saalfrank said.

• Dog

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to help them get up if they have fallen or to transfer from one seat to another.

Sally Irvin, founder of Indiana Canine Assistant and Adolescent Network, chose prison-based training so the dogs would receive constant and consistent instruction.

The program is just as beneficial to inmates, Irvin said.

"It provides offender/handlers with meaningful work that challenges them, holds them accountable 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and pushes them to look at how they relate to the world around them. A person's style of dog training often parallels their relationships with people," she said.

A marriage and family therapist who worked in the medical field, Irvin said she founded the program after seeing how powerfully the animal-human bond can affect people's physical and emotional health.

"When with a therapy dog, children would cry less and settle down to allow physicians to examine their painful ears, and patient's blood pressure and res-

piration levels would level out," she said.

Started at Pendleton Juvenile Correctional Facility in 2001, Indiana Canine now operates at Rockville Correctional Facility for women, Branchville Correctional Facility for men and Indiana Women's Prison in Indianapolis.

During its five years, the program has successfully trained and partnered 25 assistance dogs and has provided roughly 100 inmates with meaningful work. There are 34 dogs in training and dozens of people across the state waiting for a dog.

Earlier this month, Amy Switzer of Lafayette returned to college, something she didn't dream possible when she was sentenced to Rockville five years ago. Leaving her four children behind, the 39-year-old thought her life was over.

"There was something missing in my life, but I didn't know what it was," she said.

In prison, Switzer was selected to participate in Indiana Canine. She has trained three service dogs, including Luke.

Usually 8- to 10-week-old puppies when they begin training, the service dogs work intensively with their handlers for about 18 months before graduating.

Irvin said dogs need to be intel-

ligent, demonstrate a strong desire to work, maintain attention with their trainers and have body awareness.

"They must be able to walk through tight quarters, like at Cracker Barrel, without knocking off everything on the shelves," she said.

The average cost of raising and training a service dog is \$17,000. Indiana Canine is funded solely by individual donations and private foundations.

Last month, Switzer graduated her most recent trainee, Ozzie. The yellow Lab was being placed with Jessica Greenfield, a marketing and public relations student at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville.

As part of the graduation ceremony, Switzer walked Ozzie across a stage and handed his leash to Greenfield.

It was a bittersweet moment. "He glanced back at me only once," she said. "It was like sending my kid off to college, only it was forever."

Switzer is now studying to become a substance-abuse counselor and continues as an Indiana Canine volunteer.

She credits the program for opening her eyes to a new way of life.

"I am grateful to have been given a second chance," she said.

• Wealth

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1)

Orleans, also has found that baby boomer and Gen X parents are much more likely to spend money on their children than parents who lived through the Great Depression and World War II.

Today, she notes, young people are known for their collective billion-dollar spending power, much of it thanks to money

they get from their parents.

"They have a different idea of what's necessary," Fishman says of young people. "For them, a cell phone is normal; an iPod is normal; a Game Boy is normal."

Some see the heightened expectations setting up inevitable disappointment.

"There are a lot of young people hitting 25 who are making, say, \$35,000 a year, who expected they'd be millionaires or at least making six figures," says psychologist Jean Twenge. She's a professor at San Diego State

University and author of "Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled and More Miserable Than Ever Before."

They're also entering adulthood with more college loans and credit cards debt.

No wonder, Twenge says, we hear so many 20somethings talking about the quarter-life crisis.

"We're telling them they're special and they can do anything they want, and then they're growing up and finding out that's not true," Twenge says.

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