BirthWell Partners’ mission is to improve the health of low-resource mothers and infants in central Alabama by offering free and reduced-cost childbirth education, breastfeeding assistance, and non-medical labor support provided by birth doulas.

BirthWell Partners: Healthier Birth=Healthier Communities

The health of a community is measured by the health of its children. Too many children in Alabama are born too soon and too small, and many of our babies live in a “first food desert” where breastfeeding is not encouraged. Lack of access to high-quality information and support during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum contribute to Alabama’s many birth disparities.

BirthWell Partners’ goal is to improve infant health in Central Alabama through increased access to such support. In a nutshell, what we do is:
1. Teach childbirth classes
2. Train women to become labor support professionals (i.e. “Doulas”)
3. Provide free/reduced cost doula services

The potential impact of childbirth education and doula support are greatest for women at higher risk for poor infant health. Our program exclusively serves a population that is least likely to have access to, but stands to benefit the most, from these services.

Doulas and childbirth classes empower women--at a key point in life--to participate in their own health care decisions; helping them make informed choices during pregnancy, birth, and parenting.

Research shows that when women have support, they are less likely to deliver a low-birth weight or preterm baby, to have a surgical birth (c-section), or to suffer from postpartum depression.

In addition, they are more likely to have a positive birth experience, to initiate and continue breastfeeding, and to report greater confidence in parenting.

When we make childbirth classes and doula services accessible to any woman--regardless of her ability to pay--we give children in some of our most vulnerable communities a chance of better health and nutrition from the start of life.
**Doula Training:**

Our comprehensive doula training program drives our volunteer doula services and meets a vital part of our mission. This year we trained 23 doulas: 7 on scholarship and 16 non-scholarship. For scholarship trainees, cost of training is either completely or partially waived, in return for providing volunteer services for our clients. This is a win-win for doulas, clients and communities; clients give doulas valuable hands-on experience, while doulas give clients respectful, nurturing care.

Doula trainees attended a comprehensive 5-day workshop comprised of a day of childbirth education, 3 days of birth doula training, and a day of breastfeeding education and community doula training. The final day of classes is targeted at addressing health disparities; it draws nurses, doulas, and agency workers who are interested in working collaboratively to improve birth outcomes.

In addition to our twice-yearly doula trainings, we provide multiple opportunities for continuing education throughout the year. In March, we hosted an Advanced Doula Training and Annual Retreat. 22 doulas from Alabama and neighboring states earned continuing education credits as they attended educational sessions and practiced team-building skills on the low ropes course.

**Doula Services:**

**We Provide Doulas for Pregnant Women Giving Birth in Birmingham, Anniston, and Tuscaloosa Area Hospitals**

Doulas do not deliver babies. While often confused with midwives, doulas strictly provide non-medical support. Research proves that the support doulas provide has a measurable, positive impact on maternal and infant health. Higher birth weights, fewer pre-term births, and fewer c-sections are just some of the benefits.

The doulas’ role is to support her client one-on-one during pregnancy, labor and birth. During hospital labor, doulas provide continuous support, such as offering encouraging words, suggesting position changes, massaging or providing counter-pressure during contractions. They also encourage early skin-to-skin contact, assist with breastfeeding, and help mother and baby learn to respond to one another’s cues during the first hours after birth.

Doula support has been shown to improve mother/infant attachment. Women report greater satisfaction with their birth experience, which affects how they feel during the challenging early weeks and months of parenting. A positive start to mother-infant interactions can provide long lasting benefits to children’s emotional and physical development.

“I could not have done it without her. She was amazing. So encouraging when I said I couldn’t do it she massaged me, she held me—anything I needed she was there.”
Childbirth Classes
*We Educate Women About the Normal Process of Childbirth and the Importance of Breastfeeding:*

To make truly informed decisions, and to find out about the benefits of doula support, women must have access to comprehensive, evidence-based childbirth classes. We teach childbirth classes in several community locations, such as churches and schools, so that women can get information about birth and breastfeeding without having to travel far.

Classes give parents reliable, research-based information and confidence to make health care decisions for themselves and their children during the childbearing year. Topics are covered in greater depth than in typical hospital classes and are tailored to meet the needs of attendees. Topics covered include: maintaining a healthy pregnancy, warning signs of preterm labor, the birth process, risks and benefits of commonly utilized labor interventions, breastfeeding, and newborn care.

Last year we facilitated childbirth classes for 65 people at JCCEO Early Head Start, Aletheia House, and Woodlawn High School.

Above: Attendees at JCCEO learned a new way to bond through babywearing.

### Outcome Data: Measurable Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>National (ref)</th>
<th>State of Alabama</th>
<th>Jefferson County (3)</th>
<th>Jefferson County Medicaid</th>
<th>BWP 2011-2016 (n=246)</th>
<th>BWP 2015-2016 (n=48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-Section Rate</td>
<td>32.2% (2)</td>
<td>35.4 (1a)</td>
<td>33.4% (3)</td>
<td>31% (3)</td>
<td>28.63%</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidural Rate</td>
<td>62 (4)</td>
<td>84.2% (3)</td>
<td>82.6% (3)</td>
<td>57.08%</td>
<td>57.78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Gestational Age (weeks)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38.4 (3)</td>
<td>38.3 (3)</td>
<td>39.06%</td>
<td>39.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Birth Weight lbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.98 (3)</td>
<td>6.77 (3)</td>
<td>7.16%</td>
<td>7.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTB &lt;37 wks gestation</td>
<td>9.57 (1a)</td>
<td>11.66 (1a)</td>
<td>10.9% (3)</td>
<td>12.3% (3)</td>
<td>10.61%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Birth Weight Infants (all ages)</td>
<td>8.0 (1a)</td>
<td>10.1 (1a)</td>
<td>11.3% (3)</td>
<td>14.1% (3)</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding Initiation</td>
<td>79.2 (5)</td>
<td>67.3 (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>92.31%</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BF at discharge</td>
<td>68.1 (3)</td>
<td>57.1 (3)</td>
<td>95.68%</td>
<td>88.19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References:
Many Thanks to the Organizations and Individuals Who Helped Make Our Work Possible Last Year:

- Beverly Brown
- Carrie Buntain
- The Caring Foundation of BCBS Alabama
- Caryn Corenblum
- Truus Delfos-Broner
- Embody Practice Center
- Jeff & Dana Gale
- Shanté Hamm
- Homewood Friends & Family Chiropractic
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- Jason’s Deli
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- Mrs. J. B. Mazer
- Millionnaires Club
- Judy Muir
- Marion Renneker
- Larraine Reznik
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- Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust
- Elizabeth Thompson
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  - BirthWise in Birmingham
  - Brookwood Medical Center
  - Buck Mulligan’s Public House
  - Glenda Dickerson
  - Hannah Ellis
  - JCCCE
  - Noel Leithart
  - Sheila Lopez
  - Jamie Routman
  - Elizabeth Steele
  - Villager Yoga
  - Adrian Ward
  - Rene Yerby

“**My doula was invaluable.”**

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**Board of Directors**

- Beverly Brown
- Zenoria Causey
- Dr. Jesanna Cooper
- Truus Delfos-Broner
- Shanté Hamm
- Emily Hess Levine
- Audrey Oyama
- Dr. Tina Simpson
- Lydia Thurston
- Dr. Beverly VonDer Pool
- Martha R. Williams

**Staff**

- Dalia Abrams
  - Executive Director of Program Operations
- Susan Petrus
  - Executive Director of Business Operations

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**Financial Statement of Activities**

**Revenue**

- Contributions $3,920
- Grants $19,500
- Fundraisers/Events $190
- Fees for Service $11,587
- **Total Revenue** $35,197

**Expenses**

- Salaries and Benefits $22,054
- Professional Fees $1,735
- Insurance $127
- Volunteer Expenses $942
- Equipment, Supplies & Materials $1,559
- Facility rental $708
- Advertising & Promotion $932
- Banking Fees, Licenses & Memberships $604
- Computer and Internet $332
- Staff Development $65
- Travel $12
- Other Expenses $52
- **Total Expenses** $29,122

**Revenue Over Expenses** $6,075

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