

2015-2016 Annual Report



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.

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.

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.

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.

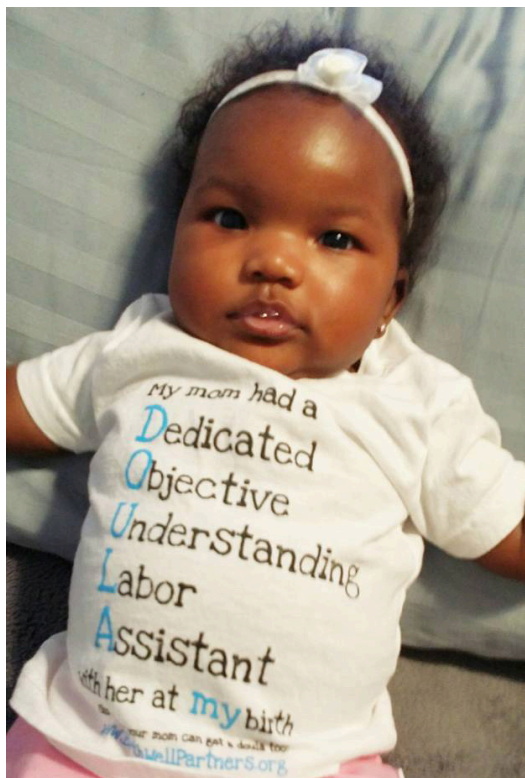
In addition to our twice-yearly doula trainings, we provide multiple opportunities for continuing education throughout the year. In March, we hosted an Advanced Doula Training and Annual Retreat. 22 doulas from Alabama and neighboring states earned continuing education credits as they attended educational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



Above: Attendees at our April 2016 Birth Doula Workshop.



Above: Doulas working together to find "balance" at the Advanced Doula Training and Annual Retreat.



"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."

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.

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 JCCCO Early Head Start, Aletheia House, and Woodlawn High School.

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

Outcome Data: Measurable Results

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

References:

1. Births: Final Data for 2013. National Vital Statistics Reports, Volume 64, Number 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 15, 2015.
2. Births: Final Data for 2014. National Vital Statistics Reports, Volume 64, Number 12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dec. 23, 2015. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf
3. JCDH Data Set: 2014 Outcomes for Jefferson County. Personal Communication from Richard Sinsky, August 2016.
4. Listening to Mothers III: Report of the Third National U.S. Survey of Women's Childbearing Experiences. Childbirth Connection, May 2013.
5. Breastfeeding Report Card – United States 2014. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014. (based on 2011 data)

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



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“My doula was invaluable.”

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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