

Our Experiences at The Midwife Center

Stories of Mothers, Their Birth Partners, and Their Supporters

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Ed DeHart, Father and Birth Partner

When my oldest son Jamie was born, I intended to be in the delivery room to be with him as he came into the world. Minutes before taking my first wife to the delivery room, the hospital staff sent me on an errand to fetch luggage. By the time I got back, my wife was in the delivery room, the staff refused in roundabout ways to take me there, and my son was born without the eager, loving attendance of his father. Shortly after he was born, they wheeled him out in a little cart, allowed me to look at him, then wheeled him off to the nursery. It was a Saturday just before noon. My wife got to feed him that evening. I didn't get to feed him until Sunday evening. That was the first time I was able to touch my son Jamie.

During the pregnancy that produced Jamie, I was just as excluded. I never got to be at any of the exams, I never got to hear his heartbeat, and I never got to know my son before he was born. At that time, no one was being proactive on making the father a part of the creation of the family. There was no encouragement or teaching, there was no one to bring me into the process, and I never thought to ask.

Twenty-five years later, the birth of my youngest son took place at The Midwife Center. What a difference a birth center makes! The first thing is that during all the exams, I was always part of the discussions, and they take a picture of the family. Because we were happy to have our 10-year-old daughter Elizabeth with us, the midwives included her in the discussions too. It wasn't just my wife on her own. We were having a baby.

When my wife Ann went into labor, we eventually all went to The Midwife Center. I was able to be with my wife during all stages of her labor, rub her back, hold her, comfort her. I helped her to bring my youngest son, Alex, into the world. Our daughter and elder son and I were able to be there the whole time and to be with her during the birth. I cut the baby's cord and we all held him within minutes of his entry into the world. After the birth, we all curled up on the bed together.

The midwives did everything they could to encourage our interaction as a loving family. The midwives taught me how to support Ann in breastfeeding. Alex was a little chilly just after he was born, so he was given to me to hold against my chest to warm him. I was his warming tray! He never left the arms of a family member for the eight hours we spent at The Midwife Center. As he was born, he came into the arms of people who loved him. We chose what the birthing experience would be like and the midwives supported us in those choices. What a beautiful way to come into the world, and what a difference from a traditional hospital environment.

Ed DeHart

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