

## Not your Mother's Midwife



Louanne Watson, CNM,  
Salem Nurse Midwives

*With advanced education and training, today's midwives have redefined their profession.*

When Gloria Espericueta discovered she was pregnant with her second child, she wanted a different experience this time around.

"I didn't know anything when I was pregnant with my first child," she admits. "I wasn't sure what to expect, and I was scared."

Fortunately, being in the right place at the right time led her to a decision that would transform her birthing experience. The Silverton Hospital environmental services employee was assigned to the operating room, a situation that allowed her to meet and get to know the obstetricians and midwives performing surgical births.

"I got to talking to them, and decided to go with a midwife," she recalls. "It was great. Midwives stay with you the whole time, and really explain what you're going through and what to expect. It made the process easier for me."

Two-time midwife patient Tina Anfilofieff shares Gloria's enthusiasm.

"I really enjoyed the experience," says Tina, whose second child was born in November. "A certified nurse midwife provides essentially the same maternity care that a doctor does. And if something's out of her realm of expertise, a midwife will refer you to a physician. So either way, you are well taken care of."

Midwifery has been practiced in America since the pilgrims came over on the Mayflower. However, myths and misconceptions run rampant even today. Probably the most common, notes Christine Weinmeister, CNM, is the belief that midwives are all about home births.

"People are surprised to hear I only attend births in a hospital," says Weinmeister, who practices with Women's Health Professionals in Silverton and Woodburn. "Silverton Hospital's Family Birth Center is set up wonderfully for

If you are interested in learning more about the care of certified nurse midwives, or if you would like to schedule an appointment with a midwife, call 503-364-3787.

midwifery care, and their staff is very supportive of what we do.”

Another false impression, adds Weinmeister’s colleague Melissa Mack, CNM, is that midwives are strict proponents of natural childbirth — period.

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“We’re supportive of women who choose to avoid interventions, but we also order epidurals and prescribe pain medication for those who need it,” Mack explains. “Our goal is to help our patients have the birth experience they want, and encourage them to be flexible in their expectations about labor and delivery.”

The range of services provided by certified nurse midwives is wider than many realize, says Mindie Metka, CNM. “We’re involved in all aspects of prenatal care, as well as labor and delivery,” she points out.

Midwives have advanced their profession far beyond the original definition of their title. The term “midwife” has

been used for centuries to describe an individual who supports women during the birth process. This midwife was traditionally an older female, one with children herself, perhaps, who had experience attending births. But there’s much more to the profession now, says Nancy MacMorris-Adix of Salem Nurse Midwives.

“As certified nurse midwives in Oregon, we’re all master’s-degree prepared,” she explains. “We’ve completed an accredited training program and passed a national certification exam. We’re licensed as nurse practitioners by the Oregon State Board of Nursing and we can write prescriptions.”

Though the evolution of midwifery over the centuries has resulted in increasingly higher standards of education and professionalism, one thing has remained the same: The philosophy of midwifery focuses on the needs of the individual and family for physical care, emotional and social support and active involvement of significant others according to cultural values and personal preferences.

For Weinmeister, that’s what makes her profession so special. “I feel midwifery care is very individualized care,” she says. “Every woman is unique. What works for one person may not work for another. In pregnancy and childbirth, we all have the goal of a healthy mom and baby. My other goal is to help my patients feel satisfied with the childbirth experience. For a lot of women, that might simply mean that they feel nurtured, listened to, and safe. That’s why we’re there.”



## Meet the Midwives



Karen Armstrong, CNM, MSN



Nancy MacMorris-Adix, CNM, MN



Louanne Watson, CNM, MSN