

# FRIENDS OF MICHIGAN MIDWIVES

educate • promote • support

## From the President

*Melissa Ryba*

Welcome to the first edition of the Friends of Michigan Midwives Newsletter! We are hoping to use this as a way to keep our supporters informed and connected to what is happening across the state regarding midwife advocacy and education.

FoMM began in 2006 as a consumer group created to help midwives promote their profession - something they often have a hard time doing as they are usually working around the clock with birthing women. In 2009, FoMM became proactive in helping the Michigan Midwives Association's efforts to gain licensure for out of hospital midwives. Now in 2010, FoMM has been hard at work gearing up towards lobbying efforts that should begin in full force in 2011.

Currently the practice of out of hospital midwifery in Michigan is considered unregulated, and in unregulated state midwives can be charged with practicing medicine without a license, manslaughter, criminal neglect, child endangerment, etc. Gaining licensure for out of hospital (OOH) midwives would legitimize their profession, provide safety from all these criminal charges, as well as open the door for insurance companies and Medicaid to start routinely covering OOH births.



At this point, FoMM's primary goal is fundraising, as lobbyists are quite costly. You can help immediately by supporting our fundraisers or by becoming a member.

*The Big Push for Midwives* is another group connected to the movement of

licensure of midwives across all 50 states. At the last count, 27 states allow Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) to practice legally. *The Big Push* is a great resource for us as we can use the model used by the previous 27 states.

By joining our Yahoo group, Facebook page, or membership database, you can stay up to the minute on how to help.

The time will come when we need our supporters to write letters to our legislators, volunteer on a campaign, or even take the time to visit our legislators in person.

Most of us have had a midwife touch our lives, hopefully we can all give back in some way during this time to ensure that future generations will have the great experience and care of a midwife.

Melissa Ryba,  
FoMM President

### Mission

#### Statement:

To educate and inform the public about the profession of midwifery and the Midwives Model of Care; to promote and support the profession of midwifery in the state of Michigan; to support local chapters of FoMM in providing hands on services and assistance to the midwives in their area.

### Inside this Issue

Legislative Update	2
Fundraiser Updates!	2
Midwife Spotlight	4
Board Members	4
Frequently Asked Questions about CPMs	5
Become a Member	5
Board Member Bios	6

## Legislative Update

*Kelly Drake, Michigan Midwives Association (MMA) Liaison*

The Michigan Midwives Association's Legislative Committee is moving toward introducing legislation in 2011 to license Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) in Michigan.

The committee has been busy rallying support for the licensure effort. Informational meetings were held in Grand Rapids in March and in the Detroit area in May to update midwives and interested students, childbirth professionals, consumers, and supporters on the committee's progress. The next meeting will be a potluck held in Traverse City on Sunday, July 25 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the home of Rachael & John Taylor, 617 Washington St., Traverse City 49686.

The Legislative Committee also has given presentations to professional associations across the state to inform their members about Certified Professional Midwives and the licensure effort. So far, presentations have been given to local chapters of the state certified nurse midwife association and the state nurses association.

On June 16, a small group of midwives and I visited legislators in their offices in Lansing to discuss licensure for Certified Professional Midwives. We had appointments with seven legislators or staffers and invitations to call a few more legislators off the Senate floor in the afternoon to chat.

Overall, the meetings went very well. Some of the legislators we spoke to were quite enthusiastic about the licensure effort. Everyone seemed very interested in the idea and told us that the effort was on the right path with meeting with legislators so early. We gave each person we met with a packet of information about midwives and how midwifery care with a CPM practicing out of hospital is both safe & cost effective.

The group is also compiling a database of supporters. Anyone who can agree that birth outside the hospital with a trained midwife should be a legal option in Michigan is a supporter! Name, address, and email can be sent to [action@michiganmidwives.org](mailto:action@michiganmidwives.org).

### Legislative Update Informational Meetings

**Sunday, July 25th**

**1:00 - 4:00pm**

*Bring a dish to pass!*

**Rachael & John Taylor**

**617 Washington St**

**Traverse City 49686**

**231-922-1187**

**rachaellift@gmail.com**

Midwives, interested students, childbirth professionals, consumers, and supporters are invited to hear the latest update on the progress of the MMA's Legislative Committee, as it moves toward introducing legislation to license Certified Professional Midwives in 2011. The meeting will also feature information on how you can get involved in the licensure effort!

**September 18**

**For Southwestern Michigan  
in Kalamazoo.**

**Details to come.**

## Fundraiser Updates!

FoMM held a series of fundraisers across the state this spring in support of the effort to license Certified Professional Midwives in Michigan. The *Great Lakes, Great Midwives!* fundraising campaign kicked off in April and wrapped up with an event in the Ann Arbor area in June. Attendees at each event received an update on the legislative effort and information on how they can get involved. There was also opportunity to purchase FoMM t-shirts and other items and to become a member of the group.

### **Lansing, April 23rd**

*Kelly Drake, MMA Liaison*

The first *Great Lakes, Great Midwives!* fundraiser was held in Lansing on April 23, 2010. The venue was Perspective 2, a creative, urban-cool, studio space in Old Town. The event featured music, beer, wine, appetizers, and a celebra-

tion of midwife Kip Kozlowski's retirement. It was a great evening where FoMM was able to sell some fundraising merchandise and recruited several new members!

**☞ Traverse City, May 2nd**

*Melissa Waterstripe, Northern Michigan Regional Coordinator*

In celebration of International Midwives Day a Family Concert and Silent Auction was held at the City Opera House in Traverse City. The concert featured May Erlewine, Seth Bernard and Rachael Davis and her band, with Traverse City's own Ashley MacTavish opening the musical evening. Refreshments were served along with some fabulous local brew and wine. A space set aside in front of the stage was filled with enthusiastic children who danced the night away! In addition to the concert, many people took advantage of the silent auction where many

locally made products were available for bidding. During intermission there was time for a few speakers to share information about out of hospital birth midwives and their current efforts to become licensed in the state of Michigan. There were quite a few attendees who said they

just came for the music but were happy to leave a bit more educated about midwifery and birth!



**☞ Grand Rapids, May 15th**

*Melissa Hale, Vice-President*

On May 15, 2010, Friends of Michigan Midwives Grand Rapids Region hosted a Family Fun Festival. The day started off with a delicious pancake breakfast. Afterwards, the Festival got into full swing. An eclectic mix of

family-friendly performers provided music, drumming, and story telling throughout the day. In the Gathering Hall, a variety of local vendors were in attendance, and a tasty, nourishing meal was available for purchase. Festival attendees were able to pick up some wonderful deals at the AMAZING silent auction filled with items from local businesses. A henna artist and massage therapist were available to pamper the adults. Everyone also

enjoyed gazing at the truly wonderful *Bellies, Birth and Beyond* Art Show.

Without a doubt, though, it was the children who enjoyed the festival the most. Games, crafts, face painting, tattoos... the kids could not be torn away! And then the Kidz Tumble Express, a mobile gymnastics bus, arrived for even more fun!

Each family that arrived received a packet of information about the licensure initiative for Midwives, and enjoyed seeing the push-pin map locating all the practicing midwives in Michigan. We were able to raise some funds and awareness both in one fun-filled day!



## ☞ Ypsilanti, June 13th

*Amanda Topping, CPM*

The Corner Brewery fundraiser went really well! We were able to raise just over \$900 for FoMM. Thanks to Jahmanna Selassie and Vera Davis for wo-manning the FoMM table all afternoon. Thanks to the amazing musicians and poets that made the event so enjoyable.

We couldn't have done this event without the support and help of Ypsilanti's own Community Records (a fabulous non-profit that helps kids better their lives through music, education and self-expression!).

So thanks to all who came to support this event. We appreciate everyone in this community!

*Look for more events to occur across the state as we continue to raise funds to lobby for licensure in 2011. Every contribution makes an impact!  
THANK YOU for supporting FoMM and our midwives!*

## Midwife Spotlight - Shannon Pawson, CPM

Shannon is a Certified Professional Midwife serving the Grand Rapids area. She received her academic training through the Michigan School of Traditional Midwifery. She then completed the NARM PEP process while living in Texas. She feels very fortunate to have been a young midwife in the Dallas - Fort Worth area where homebirth was relatively common, midwifery licensing was in place and there were plenty of diverse midwives willing to help guide her on her path. She apprenticed with several midwives including British trained midwives, Certified Nurse Midwives and Certified Professional Midwives in both home and birth center locations. Once settled back into her hometown of Rockford Michigan in October of 2006 Shannon opened Your HomeBirth and has been happily busy helping families with their 'birth'days.

In her personal time, Shannon spends her days busily tending to her wonderful children. Her five year old Juniper was born in Guatemala. Shannon is very proud of her accomplishment of inducing lactation and breastfeeding her daughter until the birth of her son Bowie, now two. Shannon volunteers each summer for a children's camp that celebrates International Adoption and educates families about different cultures and countries. She loves yoga, dancing, gardening and spending time with friends and family.

Shannon also volunteers with the Michigan Midwives Association. She is currently the database coordinator for the legislative core group. This group of midwives is working towards introduction of legalizing out of hospital midwifery in our state.



## FoMM Board Members - *learn more about your board on page 6*

**Melissa Ryba, President**  
Traverse City  
melissa@ryba.net

**Melissa Hale, Vice-President**  
Sparta  
diaper\_junkie@yahoo.com

**Vera Davis, Treasurer**  
Ann Arbor  
vera@davisfarm.com

**Ronessa Butler, Secretary**  
Williamsburg  
ronessa@gmail.com

**Kelly Drake, MMA LCG Liaison**  
East Lansing  
ekdrake@comcast.net

**Areka Blain, Marketing/PR Chair**  
Traverse City  
jason.areka@gmail.com

**Jodi Borsk, GR Regional Coordinator**  
Grand Rapids  
jorsk@comcast.net

**Melissa Waterstripe, NM Regional Coordinator**  
Cedar  
birthbyheart@charter.net

**Jahmanna Selassie, AA Regional Coordinator**  
Ann Arbor  
omega4one@yahoo.com



## *Frequently Asked Questions about Michigan Licensure for Certified Professional Midwives*

*Melissa Hale, FoMM Vice-President*

Together, the Friends of Michigan Midwives and the Michigan Midwives Association will be asking our state legislature to introduce legislation in 2011 to license Certified Professional Midwives in Michigan.

### **Who certifies midwives, and what does it take to become one?**

Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) are credentialed by the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) to provide out-of-hospital maternity care for healthy women experiencing normal pregnancies. The CPM credential, issued by NARM, is nationally accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). NARM certification for CPMs includes: a rigorous educational and training process generally requiring a minimum of three to five years to complete; verification of knowledge and skills through the successful completion of a national board exam; a clinical skills assessment process; continuing education and re-certification every three years; and clinical experience in out-of-hospital settings

### **What is the difference between certification and licensure?**

The Certified Professional Midwife is a credential obtained through a national credentialing organization, NARM. But, each individual state determines its own laws regarding licensing of any profession. Before the CPM credential was established in 1994, individual states that licensed midwives each had their own requirements and standards.

Since the availability of the CPM credential, the CPM has mainly become the basis for state licensure. Twenty-seven states now license out-of-hospital midwives. However, the State of Michigan is not one of them. Michigan currently has no regulations regarding out-of-hospital midwives, which is why we are seeking licensure in 2011.

### **How will licensure of Certified Professional Midwives benefit families?**

Licensure will improve access to out-of-hospital-birth for families who desire this option by laying the groundwork for providing insurance and Medicaid coverage of care with midwives. Licensure will improve continuity of care when a transfer of care to hospital is necessary. Licensure protects consumers' future access to midwifery care by protecting midwives from criminal charges.

### **How will licensure of Certified Professional Midwives benefit Michigan?**

Michigan faces a deepening crisis in the quality, cost and availability of health care. Certified Professional Midwives possess valuable knowledge and skills in home and birth center care. They are responsive to the needs of underserved and special populations. CPMs offer increased access to primary maternity care that is safe and significantly reduces health care costs. Michigan can experience these benefits by improving access to Certified-Professional Midwives through licensure.

## **Memberships Needed!**

Become a member of FoMM and support your midwives today! Membership is \$20 annually. Lifetime memberships can be purchased for \$150. These financial gifts through memberships will go a long way to support FoMM. Friends of Michigan Midwives is a domestic non-profit corporation registered in the State of Michigan. All Board members are volunteers. Unfortunately, donations are not tax deductible due to our lobbying efforts. **To become a member**, please send your name, address, phone, and email along with your membership check made out to FoMM to Vera Davis, 5962 Cedar Ridge Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Memberships may also be purchased through our website, [friendsofmichiganmidwives.org](http://friendsofmichiganmidwives.org).

Join our Yahoo Group at <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Friendsofmichiganmidwives/>

Visit *The Big Push for Midwives* at [www.thebigpushformidwives.org](http://www.thebigpushformidwives.org)

Visit FoMM website, under construction! at [friendsofmichiganmidwives.org](http://friendsofmichiganmidwives.org)

## FoMM Board Member Biographies

### **Melissa Ryba, President**

I live in beautiful Traverse City with my two children, Nora (5) and Gavin (9), and Russ, my husband of 13 years. I became active in the movement to promote natural birth after having a cesarean for my first birth, and upon my second pregnancy, finding out how limited the options were for attempting a vaginal birth after cesarean. The reality that women often do not have the final say in what is best for their own bodies and babies in a hospital setting disturbed me and I have felt strongly about advocating for women's options in birth ever since. I hope that through my work with FoMM, we will be able to ensure out of hospital birth as a sustainable option for women; I deeply appreciate my ability to have a homebirth with my daughter, Nora. To relax I enjoy mountain and road biking, playing soccer, gardening, and reading.

### **Melissa Hale, Vice-President**

Melissa lives in Sparta and is the mother of 3 boys, with her fourth baby expected in October. And no, she's not finding out the gender! She had an unmedicated hospital birth with her first birth, attended by a family practitioner who followed a more midwifery than medical approach. Although happy enough with her birth and her doctor, she felt like a lot of the hospital protocols were unnecessary and interfered in small but significant ways with initial bonding and breastfeeding. She later met a handful of moms who had homebirths, and realized that was what she wanted. Her next baby was born at home attended by a midwife... and a birth activist was born! Melissa has been on the Board of Friends of Michigan Midwives since 2007. Besides taking care of her kids and working with FoMM, Melissa loves to read, knit, scrapbook, and bike.

### **Vera Davis, Treasurer**

Vera lives in Ann Arbor with her husband and two girls, ages 7 and 4. She realized after the first hospital birth that, for her, normal birth was nearly impossible to achieve in a hospital setting, and had her second baby at home. It would be unthinkable to her if the choice to have an out of hospital birth became unavailable to women, so she joined FoMM in 2008 to help support midwives in Michigan. She and her family love to travel, and she also loves photography, knitting, sewing, and scrapbooking.

### **Ronessa Butler, Secretary**

I've been married to Dave for just over 6 years. We have two daughters, Lily & Aevryn, ages 3 & 5. We currently live just outside of Traverse City, but we're contemplating a big move to Europe or other parts far away. I chose to be a part of FoMM because I believe in midwives and the midwifery model of care. I want to help preserve tradition, while increasing awareness of and access to quality midwives for all families.

### **Kelly Drake, MMA LCG Liaison**

I live in East Lansing with my husband, two children and a cocker spaniel. I've lived in EL for 9 years, not counting the 4 years my husband and I spent here earlier as MSU students. My son was born by c-section, and his birth was quite traumatic for me. My quest for healing and a VBAC led me to midwifery care and a freestanding birth center, where my daughter was born into the water. I got involved with FoMM to help ensure that the option of midwifery care remains available for other women -- and to help spread the word about how great midwives are!

### **Areka Blain, Marketing/PR Chair**

Areka lives in Traverse City with her husband, Jason. She is blessed with the opportunity to stay home with their wonder-full children, Ava (3) and Rowan (1). She enjoys spending time with her family, reading, sewing, learning, and doing new things! Volunteering for FoMM is her way of funneling all her passion and excitement about natural birth toward something productive! She aspires to be a doula and birth educator. She hopes her next baby will be born at home.

### **Jodi Borst, Grand Rapids Regional Coordinator**

Jodi is the mother of two wonderful children, Laura (5) and Liam (1.5). She has been passionate about natural childbirth since she was pregnant with Laura in 2005. She has been a natural childbirth educator and doula since 2006, and became a student midwife in the Spring of 2010. She hopes to raise awareness of and support for the Midwives Model of Care through her work as the Grand Rapids Regional Director of FoMM.

### **Melissa Waterstripe, Northern Michigan Regional Coordinator**

Melissa has lived in Northern Michigan most of her life and for the past two years had lived with her family in Leelanau County on a piece of beautiful, mostly wooded land. She married Kirk over thirteen years ago, and they have two daughters, Lauren (9) and Leah (5) both born and educated at home. She and her family are busy gardeners, beekeepers, birders, and budding herbalists. Melissa's passion for supporting CPMs stems from the amazing sense of empowerment she felt after her birth experiences.

### **Jahmanna Selassie, AA Regional Coordinator**

Jahmanna lives in Ann Arbor Michigan, after living in Panama, Central America for three years. She has a loving and supportive husband and a total of eight children. All Jahmanna's babies were born outside of the hospital either in the loving hands or strong guidance of Midwives. Jahmanna works as a Birth Doula and has on the path to be a midwife since the age of fifteen. She hopes to preserve the Midwifery legacy through her work with FoMM so that her children's children can be supported and transformed with the birth of their own children as was she.

*We Believe*  
Peace on Earth begins at birth.