

GRHS now offers Certified Nurse Midwife services

Jessie van der Hagen adds to her repertoire of family care

By Deb Mercier
News Editor

When it comes to their care before, during and after giving birth, area women have a new choice close to home. Glacial Ridge Health System recently announced that current GRHS Certified Family Nurse Practitioner Jessie van der Hagen has added a new service to her repertoire: she is now also a Certified Nurse Midwife.

Van der Hagen has been with the GRHS medical team as a FNP-C since 2006. "We want people to know that I'm still here to offer family practice—I'm the same person—I'm just adding on a piece of the puzzle with labor and delivery, becoming more of an expert in women's health," she said.

It's a piece of the puzzle that van der Hagen describes as "one of the most beautiful experiences a woman and her family have." She said she's always been intrigued with the miracle of birth—that was one of the factors that led her back to school to pursue becoming a Certified Nurse Midwife.

Van der Hagen's journey toward midwifery took about a year and a half of continued education in a post-master's program through the University of Minnesota. While the first part of her education could be completed mainly online with a trip to the Cities once or twice a month, the last five months involved intensive clinical training at a metro hospital, three days a week. The final step was to pass a rigorous national board exam.

With three children ages eight, four and two, Van der Hagen said the most challenging aspect of going back to school was balancing full-time work at Glenwood Medical Center, her family's needs and study time. "I would have never been able to do it without my family," she said, "grandmas and grandpas and

just everybody pitching in and helping."

Support from Glenwood Medical Center, Glacial Ridge Hospital and the GRHS board was also instrumental in van der Hagen's decision to become a Certified Nurse Midwife. "They were very supportive and encouraging me to move forward," said van der Hagen. "They wanted to add a midwife, too—it just ended up being a really nice match. We could work on it together. They were very accommodating and understanding of all my scheduling issues—the balancing act."

What is a midwife?

A Certified Nurse Midwife provides prenatal care, labor and delivery, care after birth, family planning and pre-conception care, annual gynecological exams, and nutrition and health education to women of all ages.

Van der Hagen's position is unique; because she is also a FNP-C, she can provide care for the entire family.

And while the birth is a big portion of midwifery, van der Hagen stressed that it isn't the only part. "Midwifery encompasses all women's healthcare, from adolescence through menopause and beyond," said van der Hagen.

"I think there's a lot of misconception," she said. "When you hear 'midwife' you think home birth. There's definitely a place for midwives in a home birth setting, but most midwives practice in a hospital setting. My role will be labor and delivery in the hospital."

Women with low-risk pregnancies who



Jessie van der Hagen, a Certified Family Nurse Practitioner with Glacial Ridge Health System, recently passed her national board exam to become a Certified Nurse Midwife as well. Pictured above are van der Hagen and her family: husband, Jared, sons Oliver (center) and Eddie, and daughter Avery (back).

prefer a natural childbirth experience are ideal candidates to choose a midwife for their maternity care. A natural birth usually includes laboring and birthing without pain medications or other routine interventions, such as monitoring and IV.

For some women, this decision fits into an already health-conscious lifestyle. For others, natural childbirth is not about the pain, it's about the enjoyment of the childbirth process and having a sense of control.

If additional medical support becomes necessary, van der Hagen is trained to recognize and manage complications early and collaborate with doctors to ensure the mother's and baby's needs are met.

"I felt like this was a service [area] women deserved—to have the option," said van der Hagen. "Not that every woman has to do it, or wants to do it." But having options available locally on how they want their birth to go, what their birth plan will be, is something van der Hagen is excited to offer for area families.

To learn more about van der Hagen, midwifery and other maternity services provided at Glacial Ridge Health System, visit glacialridge.org or call 320-634-5157.