

# Birth Center Offers Community Prenatal Care

by Nancy Albrecht

The old adage goes, “it takes a village to raise a child”, but how do pregnant women and new moms find that community? This year Women’s Birth & Wellness Center (WBWC) in Chapel Hill launched Community Prenatal Care (CPC) – aimed at promoting health, building community and supporting the new mother throughout her pregnancy and into motherhood.

After one or two traditional prenatal visits in the clinic, a mom can choose CPC: monthly group visits alternating with clinic visits until her baby is born. Research indicates that the group model of care delivers a higher level of satisfaction, increased knowledge in pregnancy, and fewer preterm births.

In CPC, a group of six to ten women with similar due dates meet for six monthly sessions for 90 minutes in an informal setting with two WBWC co-facilitators: a midwife, who rotates, and a nurse, who will be the same for all sessions. Partners may participate as well. Women check and record their own weight, blood pressure, and weeks of pregnancy and keep a copy of the information in their own chart. Growth of the uterus and fetal heart tones are checked by the midwife in a private area of the group space. The group sessions follow a syllabus but the majority of the time is spent in conversation with others, learning about and sharing pregnancy, birth, and parenting concerns.

The Community model is focused on equipping the pregnant woman and her family with the ability to make decisions about her own care and building confidence in her ability to birth, feed, and parent her baby. CPC encourages the social support that is so critical to successful out-of-hospital birth. In addition to the community support, women continue to receive the benefits of one-to-one care and meeting all the WBWC providers during regular clinic visits.

“There is so much noise out there and so many people who share stories of fear and doubt surrounding natural childbirth and breastfeeding. We provide a place that builds



confidence in a woman’s ability to mother her child,” said Maureen Darcey, CNM, WBWC executive director.

For the family planning a birth center birth, the group sessions offer the opportunity to meet with like-minded women and partners who have made the same choice. In community, women and their partners have the opportunity to challenge the traditional philosophy of birth that treats pregnancy and birth as disease states, embraces technology, and builds fear.

“Your group will grow together, as you gain more confidence in your body’s wisdom, increase trust in your ability to cope with pain, and strengthen the belief that you know your body and your baby better than anyone else,” said Darcey.

Women’s Birth & Wellness Center (WBWC) is a free-standing, out-of-hospital, non-profit birth center and women’s clinic in Chapel

Hill. Founded in 1996, WBWC’s mission is to provide women of diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with comprehensive primary, maternity and lactation healthcare throughout the life cycle. Learn more at [www.ncbirthcenter.org](http://www.ncbirthcenter.org).

*Nancy Albrecht, RN, BSN, IBCLC at Women’s Birth & Wellness Center. Nursing is her fourth (and final?) career after stints as a counselor, daycare provider and childbirth educator. She is also a Certified Lactation Consultant and was involved with La Leche League as a member and leader for 15 years.*

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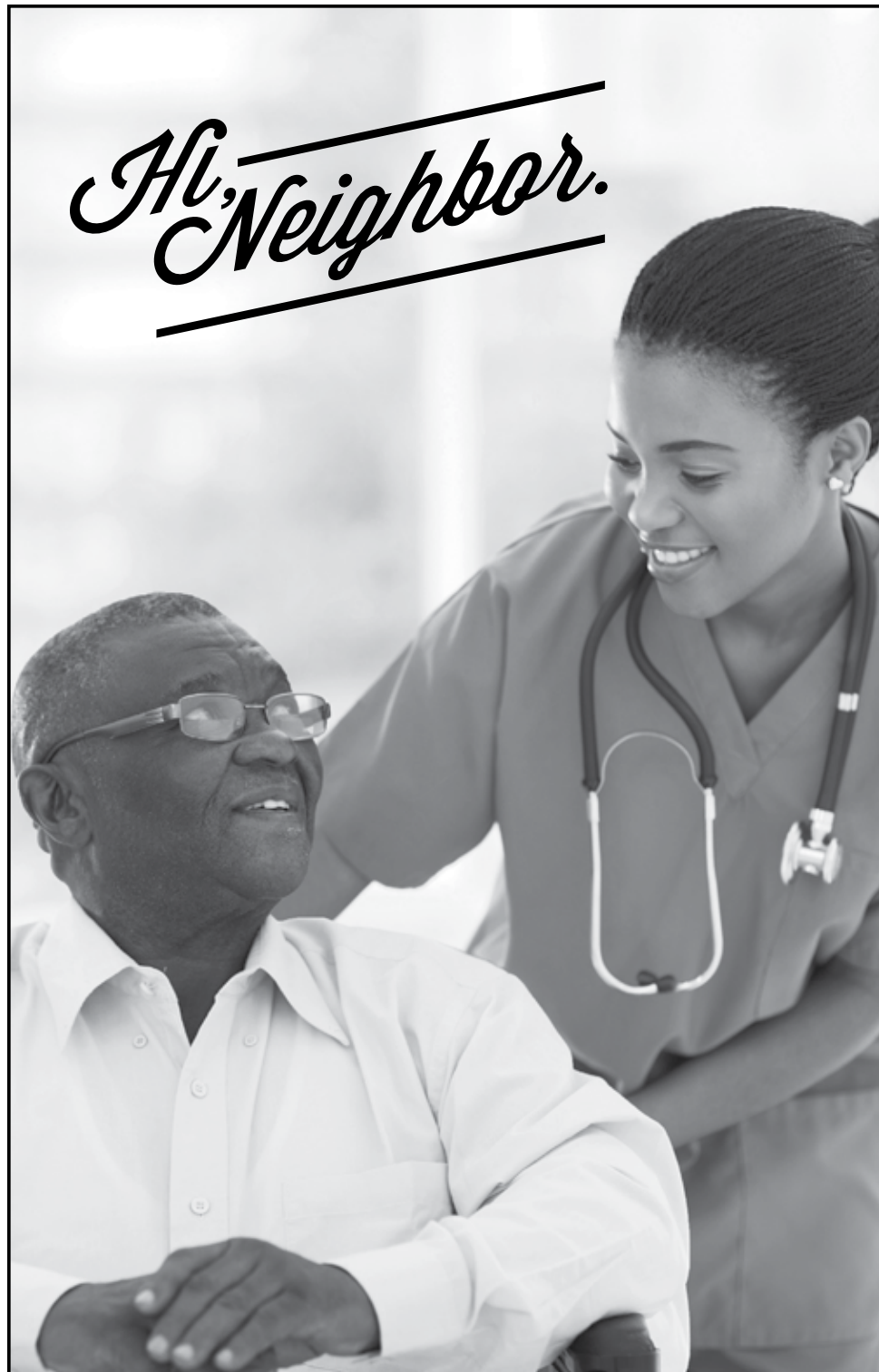
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