



"Unfortunately, the role of obstetrics has never been to help women give birth. There is a big difference between the medical discipline we call "obstetrics" and something completely different, the art of midwifery. If we want to find safe alternatives to obstetrics, we must rediscover midwifery. To rediscover midwifery is the same as giving back childbirth to women. And imagine the future if surgical teams were at the service of the midwives and the women instead of controlling them."

- Michel Odent MD

Dear Friends,

I am writing to share the new phase of the Gatekeepers Fund with you and to ask for your continued support of our work. As a collective of women and men passionate about increasing awareness of the benefits of midwifery care as well as increasing access to that care, we work to create targeted educational campaigns and grassroots alliances that integrate modern midwifery services into the community. We establish outreach projects that serve families of the highest need. We are fully committed to the art of midwifery as an essential contributor to the creation of strong and healthy families.

In 2005 the World Health Organization sponsored a world health day that was dedicated to making every mother and child count. Their goal was the prioritization of maternal child health as an integral part of poverty reduction. Reaching this goal depends largely on every mother and every child having access to health care from pregnancy through childbirth, the neonatal period and childhood. The necessity of training more midwives, in order to provide this essential primary health care for maternal child health, was highlighted in this statement. True to this spirit, the same one in which the Fund was founded, we are continuing to develop necessary community grassroots support for the ancient tradition of midwifery care to be accessible to all women and their families. Our efforts to this end have been successful due to the tremendous support provided by all of you.

Today, with its current collective of over 200 supporters, the Gatekeepers Fund has developed into a nonprofit organization whose vision is to support its outreach projects through sponsorship of student midwives in their education and strengthening our commitment to serving areas and families in need. Our outreach projects have thus far taken us to post-Katrina New Orleans, Juarez, Mexico and Taos, New Mexico and our commitment to vital midwifery practice continues to expand its reach. Simultaneously, I have continued to write about my experiences and am working on gathering my essays dedicated to normal birth and the importance of midwifery into a publishable manuscript.



Sawyer Kirley born at home with his midwife.

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The following are the current projects of the Gatekeepers Fund:

- **The Well Being Free Clinic:** A collaboration of health care professionals to provide integrative healthcare to families of Northern New Mexico; the second poorest state in the union. The Fund supports providing well woman care, reproductive health counseling for girls and women in individual and group settings and postpartum support groups. The clinic takes place twice monthly.
- **The Mother Root Project:** This is the portion of the Fund that is ready to respond with midwifery care to areas of need such as our work in post-Katrina New Orleans. Currently, we are collaborating with the World Hands Project, the group we went to Juarez with in 2006, to provide midwifery care on a Navajo reservation in southern New Mexico. Our work in Juarez will continue and is in an analysis/development stage. Part of this development work is to visit Luna Maya; a birth center in Chiapas that provides water birth and other innovative support for women and traditional birth attendants in the region. My hope is to gain more insight into providing modern midwifery care and services to Mexican women and their unique situations but to women in the United States as well.
- **Documentary Project:** In the same vein as the Unveiling Our Origin project, a photo essay collection dedicated to highlighting birth and midwives in Northern New Mexico and was displayed at the Mothering Magazine's 30th anniversary, the fund is working to develop other documentary style photo essay projects that highlight controversial areas within maternal child health such as vaginal birth after cesarean and women over 35 giving birth.

Your financial support will make the difference in all of these projects coming into their fruition. Our fundraising goal for 2007 is to raise \$25,000. If everyone who receives this letter sends a tax deductible donation of \$100, we would reach \$20,000 of this goal. Please pass this along to anyone whom you believe maybe interested in being part of this growing community. Together, we will continue to provide the education, outreach and care that midwives specialize in. We strive to move toward the realization of every family having a midwife's care. We believe in women's intrinsic ability to care for our own bodies in birthing our children. We base our actions on the principle that maternal child health should be at the forefront of a healthy society. We trust women's bodies. We support midwives.

Please visit our new website www.gatekeepersfund.org to see our new style, read the latest Writings from the Field and to stay in touch with the realization of our vision. Thank you for your ongoing support in preserving the belief that human birth is normal and women's bodies hold outstanding wisdom whose capacity to give birth normally must be protected and upheld as a key to a more peaceful humanity.

With love,

Shiela VanDerveer
Founder and Midwife

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