

City woman training to become a Doula

By Moira K. Wiley
Staff Writer

Kristy Scott is training to be a doula, or labor support specialist.

Scott completed her required training in September through Doulas of the Heartland, a nonprofit organization based in Enid that trains and certifies doulas. She's now working toward her certification, which requires her to attend and help with three births then get evaluations from each mother and delivering doctor.

Doula comes from the Greek language and means handmaiden. The word has come to refer to a woman experienced in childbirth who provides continuous physical, emotional and informational support to the laboring couple before, during and just after childbirth.

Eleven studies have shown using a doula has several effects on birth outcomes. These include shorter labor, fewer complications, Caesarean rates are reduced, less need for induced labor, use of forceps is reduced and fewer requests for pain medication and epidurals.

"Every doula has a bag of tricks," said Scott. "I'm just getting started, so I'll be adding to my bag. Right now, I have a CD of relaxing music, sock containing hard corn that can be heated in the microwave and used as a hot pack, a toothbrush and toothpaste for myself or anyone else who needs it, a swim suit for showering with the laboring mother, massage lotion, change for phone calls, and paper and pens for taking notes.

"During the birth, one of the jobs of the doula is to write down everything that happens. This is called the 'birth story' and doulas usually present these to the parents as a gift. Many parents will put these in their baby book and often comment that they didn't even remember part of what happened. The couple is so caught up in the birth, they often forget important details."

A doula's role is to "mother the mother." They offer advice to the couple, but don't make any decisions. They support the parent's decisions and help them know their options. Doulas will act as liaisons between the couple and the doctor, if needed.

"During the initial prenatal visit, doulas usually have the couple write out a birth plan," explained Scott. "Then, she will know what they want to happen during the birth and what they'd like to do in case of an emergency. It's good for a couple to have a birth plan to show their doctor, so he will know their wishes. The doula will remind the couple of their birth plan, if needed, but they aren't obligated to stick to the plan."

"If a person has a doula once, they will always use one. If they have a bad birth experience the first time, they may be more inclined to try a doula for a second birth. Unlike the nurses, who mothers sometimes form an attachment to and then they change shifts, a doula stays by the mother's side throughout the birth. It can be a great comfort to her to have the steady support of someone who is not emotionally involved."

"There are a lot of books available at the Stillwater Public Library for those interested in learning more," she said. "'The Birth Partner' by Penny Simpkin is a good book for a doula or

husband. It really explains how to support a mom in labor. Also, 'Mothering the Mother' by Klaus, Klaus & Kennell is good. There's also a lot of information on the Internet about the benefits of using a doula."

For information, visit Scott's web site, www.heavens-blessings.com or www.dona.org. Scott can be contacted at doula@heavens-blessings.com or call 408-5242.