

# Mary's Hands Network

## Our First Year in Review

An amazing impact  
ON our community  
BY our community.



## Outreach

Moms	75
Deliveries	20
Babies	21
Trainings	7
Doulas	122

# Who We Are

Mary's Hands Network is a 501 (c) (3) Louisiana-based non-profit organization with a mission to empower women, bridge the health equity gap, and promote birth excellence in our community. We believe we can achieve this by providing doula training and doula services to the childbearing women of Louisiana. Since our incorporation in March of 2023, Mary's Hands Network has quickly become a well-known and respected organization making tangible change in the birth community. Our volunteers are at the core of our work and we are pleased to share the diversity our network has so naturally cultivated.



## Mission

*At Mary's Hands Network, we're on a mission to empower women, promote birth excellence, and bridge the health equity gap in our community. We provide top-notch training programs and manage a network of dedicated volunteer community doulas who offer essential support services to the women in our community free of charge.*



## Vision

*To ensure that every woman has access to the benefits of a doula and a dedicated community of support during the perinatal period. We strive to create a society where women can achieve birth excellence and have equitable access to quality healthcare, regardless of their socioeconomic background.*





## What is a Doula?

Doulas are non-medical professionals who provide physical, emotional, informational, and practical support to mothers, helping them navigate the challenges and uncertainties they may face during this important life event. Our doulas also provide support for the first six weeks of postpartum.

## Mary's Hands Difference

Mary's Hands Network Doula Volunteers serve on teams of 3 doulas to serve 1 mother at a time. By connecting the mother with a team we are able to immediately provide her with a community dedicated to her pregnancy, birth, and motherhood experience. Our network is well connected in the community and able to connect clients to additional support services, providing them with a sense of belonging and access to resources they may not have had otherwise.



# DOULA IMPACT

## *Current Review of Literature*

# 1

## Mother and Baby Morbidity

The number of pregnancy-related deaths in the United States between 2007-2016 was 12.7 per 100,000 for white women and 40.8 per 100,000 for black women.

Doula support has been shown to decrease the rate of maternal complications by 9.2% and the incidence of infant low-birth weight by 6.2% (Everson et al., 2018; Gruber et al., 2013; Thurston et al., 2019).

# 2

## C-Section Rates

Primary c-sections are positively correlated with maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality, as well as increased cost of care. Doula support throughout pregnancy and birth has been shown to decrease the incidence of primary C-sections by an average of 7.7% (Everson et al., 2018; Gruber et al., 2013; Thurston et al., 2019).

# 3

## Breastfeeding Initiation

Initiating breastfeeding in the immediate postpartum period has numerous benefits to both mother and baby. These include improved reports of bonding and improved regulation of fetal breathing, heart rate, and blood sugar (Nommsen-Rivers et al., 2009; Thurston et al., 2019).

# 4

## Client Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction scores have a direct impact on hospital reimbursements and reported quality of care. Reports on the cost-saving nature of doula care include an increase in both client and staff satisfaction rates (Horstman et al., 2017; Kozhimannil et al., 2017; Lanning & Klamann, 2019).

## Cost Effective

# 5

Doula care not only decreases staff workload and the rate of primary c-sections but also improves birth outcomes and decreases overall labor time. This directly affects the overall cost of the care by an average of \$986 per delivery. The average return on investment for hospitals implementing doula care programs is between \$6.00 - \$15.94 per USD (Howell et al., 2020; Kabakian-Khasholian et al., 2018; Kozhimannil et al., 2017).





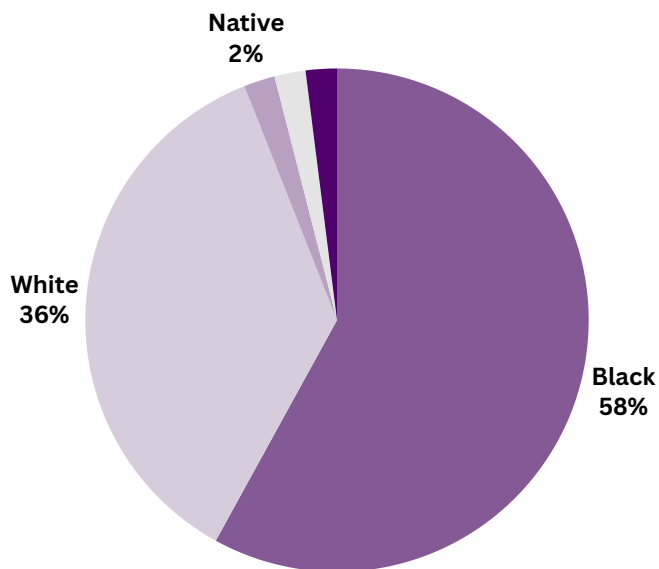
## Representation Matters

At Mary's Hands Network, diversity is not a goal we pursue—it's a natural outcome of our commitment to inclusivity. By intentionally removing barriers and opening our doors wide to all women who wish to serve, we've created a community that thrives on the richness of its members' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. It's a point of pride for us to witness the beautiful tapestry of voices and talents that have organically come together, reflecting the true essence of unity in service. We believe that when acceptance knows no bounds, representation becomes a reflection of everyone, and our network stands as a testament to the strength found in embracing the unique strengths each woman brings to the table.





# Doula Demographics

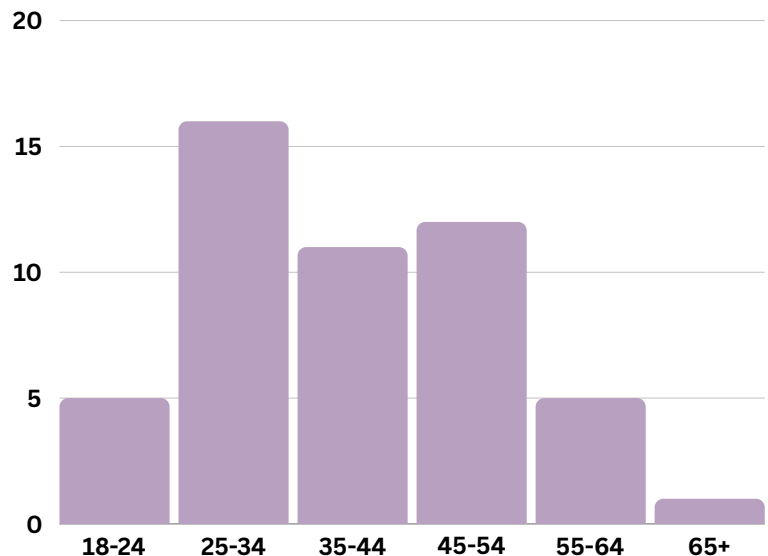


## Race / Ethnicity

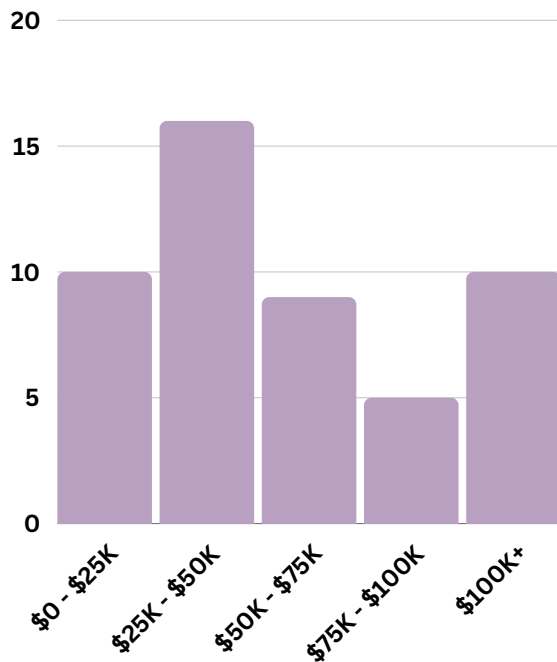
White / Caucasian:	18
Black / African American:	29
Indigenous / Native:	1
Pacific Islander:	1
Hispanic / Latino:	1

## Age Range

18 - 24	5
25 - 34	16
35 - 44	11
45 - 54	12
55 - 64	5
65 +	1





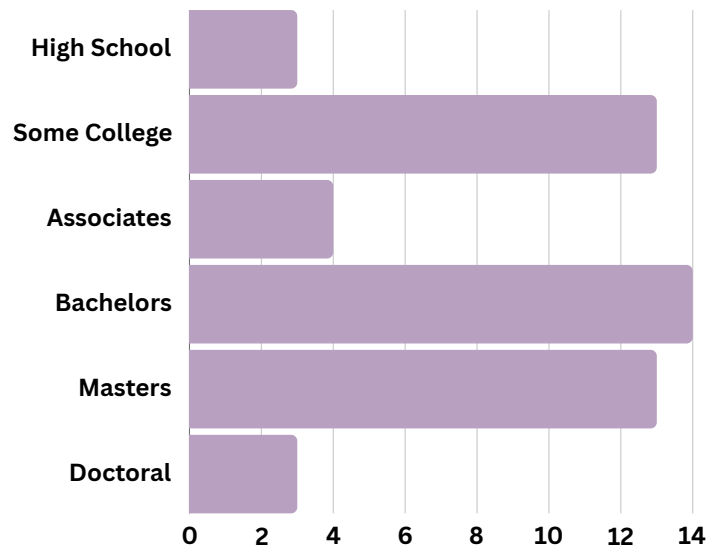


## Household Income

\$0 - \$25,000	10
\$25,001 - \$50,000	16
\$50,001 - \$75,000	9
\$75,001 - \$100,000 :	5
\$100,0001 + :	10

## Education Level

High School	3
Some College	13
Associates	4
Bachelors	14
Masters	13
Doctorate	3



# What our Doulas Have to Say

## What is your favorite memory from volunteering with Mary's Hands Network so far?

*The first class was the best. Getting to know new people and learning about all the things I wish I had known when I was pregnant. I never knew I had so many options.*

*Being present for a birth was such an overwhelming thing. There's nothing more intimate, so the invitation is very meaningful.*

*Attending my first birth at BRG! The family was appreciative and I learned a lot.*

*I was able to watch a family welcome their first little boy.*

*The look of absolute bliss I see after mom has given birth. Connecting with phenomenal women to empower other women.*

*Finding a network of incredible people who are just as passionate about women and their wellbeing as I am. People of all different walks of life find themselves in our network and I am so grateful for it.*

*The women that radiate passionate caring.*

*Training was a great way to connect with others with similar values for birth work.*

*My favorite memory is the feeling of instant sisterhood among all of the doulas.*







# DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VOLUNTEER

## *Birth Doula*

### **A COLLECTION OF QUOTES FROM OUR VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVES.**

"As a volunteer doula, I have the privilege of walking alongside women during some of the most beautiful, yet challenging times of their lives - pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum. Serving others brings great satisfaction and joy. Watching a new life begin brings tears to my eyes every time. These mamas and babies (and other support team members) will forever hold a special place in my heart!"

*Angela Gregoire*  
*Beta Doula Class*

"I always start with the words "support", "helper" and "empowerment". Then I go into examples of what those words can mean. What support do they need? To me, that's why the name of our network says it all... Mary's hands speak to what we do. The talents we all bring to this work and perhaps the gifts we are graced with that we didn't even know we had before we began. Our clients and teammates are empowering us too."

*Tasha Sibley*  
*Alpha Doula Class*

"I am a non-medical volunteer support person who provides an extra layer of support during pregnancy and after birth. my goal is to motivate and encourage you by experience, presence, and training I help motivate and encourage you; not because you are sick; but because having a baby is the most natural human experience ever. I get to join in these amazing moments by serving you."

*Dr. Margaret Evans*  
*Gamma Doula Class*

# *Innovative On Call Program*

## **BATON ROUGE GENERAL**

The Baton Rouge General has partnered with Mary's Hands Network to pioneer an innovative on call volunteer doula program for patients free of charge. MHN doulas self schedule themselves for 8-hr call shifts and are made available for patients admitted to the unit in labor. The doula volunteer then follow-up with the patients after delivery on a postpartum doula team to ensure continuity of care.



“We’ve all recognized now that it’s so much more than just a birth,” said Dr. Candace Moore, a Baton Rouge General OB/GYN. “I think there’s obviously that whole journey through pregnancy. And then even more importantly, the journey after pregnancy, just adapting to having a newborn at home, the mental side of all of that process. And so having someone else there who’s maybe been through it, and who also has lots of experience with how to handle those things, is just really, really valuable.”

-From WAFF Interview 11-20-23





# *My Birth Junkie Experience*

By: Caryl Miller

With Mary's Hands Network, there are two opportunities to support a mother during her journey. Traditionally, you are assigned to teams of two or three doulas during a mom's pregnancy. With Birth Junkies, you can sign up for shifts as the on-call doula for the Baton Rouge General's Birth Center. As the first on-call doula to serve a mother through this pilot program, I wanted to share my experience.

I received the call that a mom in labor was requesting a doula, so I grabbed my pre-packed bag and called my mother-in-law to coordinate childcare. I headed to the hospital, excited and nervous. When I got there, I followed the pink markers to the Birth Center and let them know at the door that I was the on-call doula for Birth Junkies. After I checked in, I was introduced to my client's mom, who was outside the room while her daughter was getting an epidural. She informed me that her daughter had labored to 8 cm before choosing to get some relief.

Shortly after, we entered the room where I was able to meet my beautiful momma. I told her how incredible she was for making so much progress in a relatively short time, as a first-time Mom. She and her mother both stated how much calmer they immediately felt with having a doula in the room.

They were both able to ask me questions about what to expect, both while in the hospital and during her postpartum period. I would help the nurses when they needed to adjust Mom, and I did my best to make sure all of Mom's needs were met. She continued to labor beautifully, and she delivered an adorable baby girl. I stayed about two hours after her delivery, so I was able to support her with breastfeeding and her overall comfort.

*I checked out at the nurse's station and went home feeling incredibly high, knowing I was able to make a difference for a family in my community.*



# The Reviews Are In!



## What did you enjoy most about working with a doula team?

*"They was always there with helpful advice and resources"*

*"Calmness. Provided different options/suggestions for positions during labor"*

*"Enjoyed having an additional person to support and advocate for me with knowledge and training!"*

*"The knowledge they gave me to advocate for myself"*

*"The preparation for birth and labor"*

# 100%

## Positive Feedback

We are proud to boast that all of our clients reported feeling safe with their team as well as supported and listened to throughout the process. Additionally, all of our clients have reported that they would both recommend our services to friends/family and would use our doula services for future pregnancies.





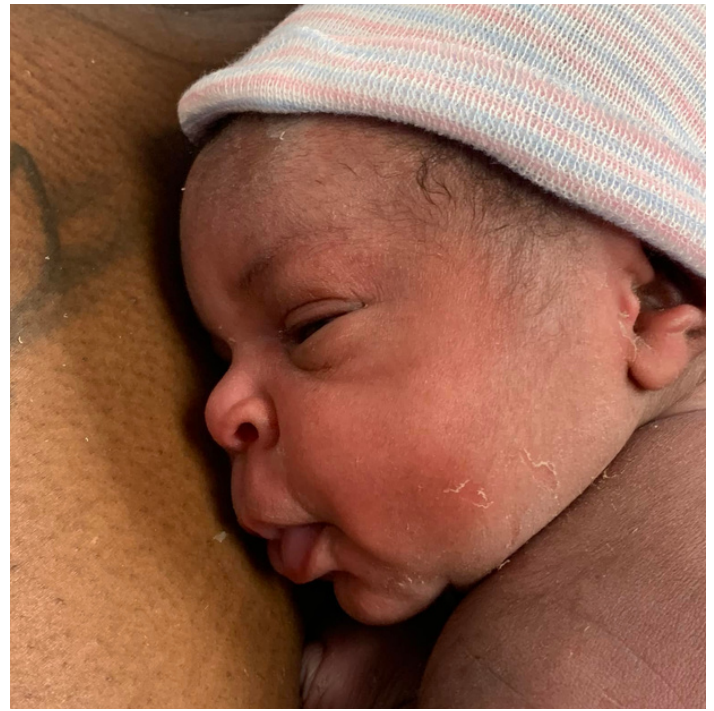
# A MOM'S PERSPECTIVE

*What it's really like to work with MHN doulas...*

“I loved how involved they were, all 3 of my doulas were willing to answer any of my questions. Even if it meant staying over the 30 minutes. They were extremely knowledgeable and a big part of why my birth was smooth and seamless. They also encouraged me to advocate for myself during pregnancy with my OBGYN. They provided me with evidence-based information that helped me get the VBAC I desired. They went above and beyond to make sure I understood everything that was happening during labor and birth. They also helped me make sure my needs were met during labor. This allowed me to save up my energy for the birth.”

*Mary's Hands Network Mom*



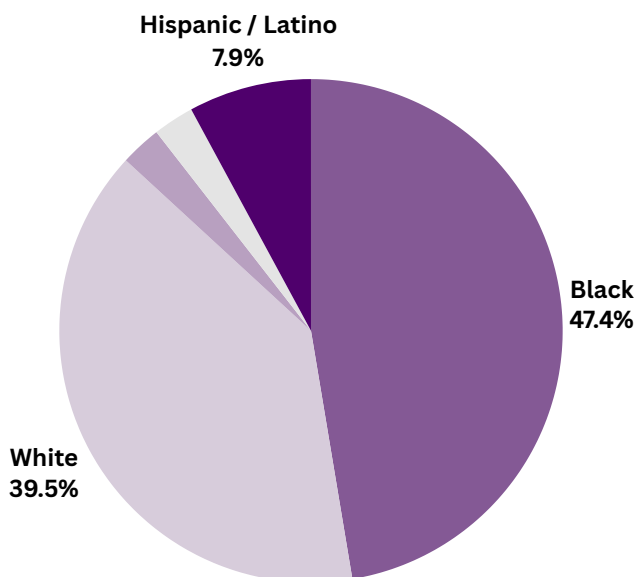


## Who We Serve

Since our first client reached out to Mary's Hands Network for doula support back in May of 2023, we have reached more than 60 women in the Greater Baton Rouge area and beyond. The majority of those clients (39.1%) were referred to Mary's Hands by a friend or family member, indicating our impact at the community level.

### Race / Ethnicity

Research shows that Black women are an average of 4 times more likely to face morbidity and mortality during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. Minority women in our community are disproportionately impacted by racism and prejudice in healthcare. Doula support is a direct and actionable way to positively impact the most vulnerable members of our community.

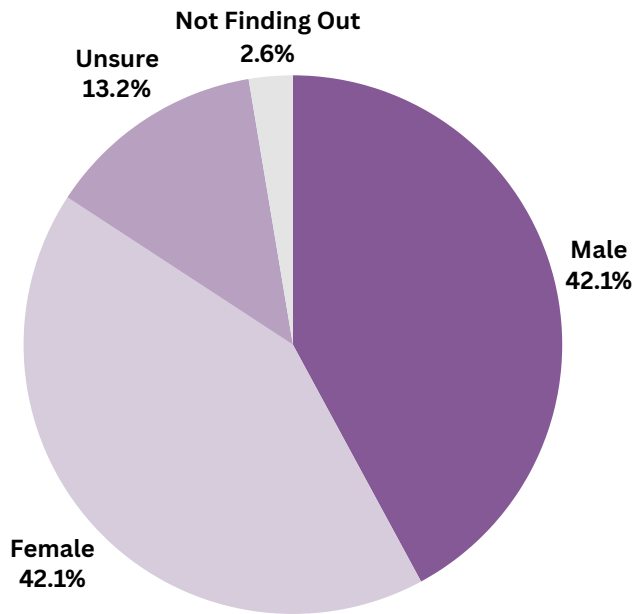


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Black / African American:	18
Indigenous / Native:	1
Pacific Islander:	1
Hispanic / Latino:	3

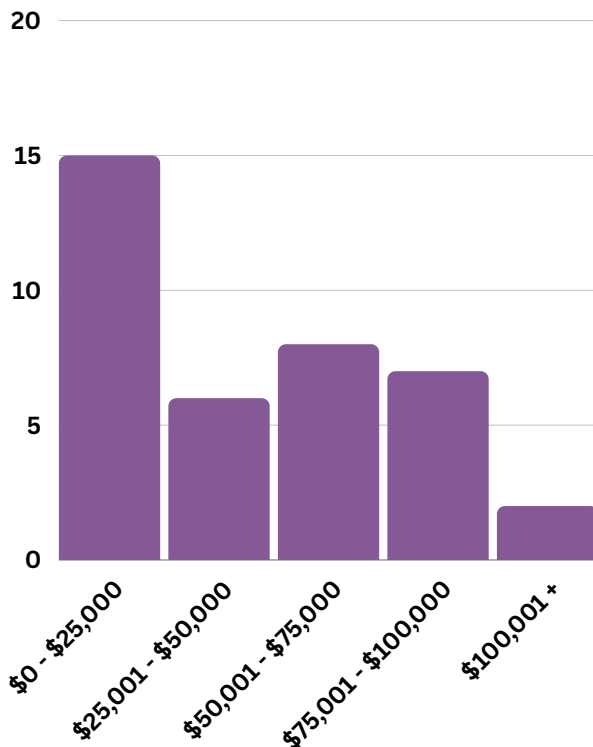


## Infant Gender

It is always fun to see just how close to 50:50 our boy-to-girl ratio turns out to be.



Male :	16
Female :	16
Unsure / Too Soon:	5
Not Finding Out:	1



## Household Income

More than half of the moms we serve have an annual household income than \$50,000. The vast majority of clients (39.5%) live on an Income at or below the poverty level.

\$0 - \$25,000 :	15
\$25,001 - \$50,000 :	6
\$50,001 - \$75,000 :	8
\$75,001 - \$100,000 :	7
\$100,001 + :	2

Household income doesn't affect client applications, and we don't consider it in assignments. Clients are declined only if we lack available doulas for their birth month. Due to high demand, we may have to turn away some applicants but refer them to other local support programs. Regardless of income, all women are welcome to apply for Mary's Hands Network volunteer doula services.



I knew that this program would work. Women want to help women. We just need a method and a mode to serve, and that's exactly what Mary's Hands Network offers.

## Letter from the President

It is with great joy and gratitude that I take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we have embarked on together as part of Mary's Hands Network. As the President of this remarkable organization, I am humbled and honored to share our progress and express my deepest appreciation for each one of you who has contributed to our success. At the core of Mary's Hands Network is a profound belief in the transformative power of compassion and care.

Reflecting on the journey that led us here, I am filled with a profound sense of awe. Since our inception, we have grown larger and faster than anticipated, and this success is a testament to the exceptional caliber of volunteers that Mary's Hands Network has attracted. I want to express my deepest gratitude to all 88 incredible women who have generously given of their time and talents to serve mothers throughout our community.

It is this collective commitment to making a difference that fuels the heart of Mary's Hands Network. As we move forward, let us continue to stand united in our mission, bound by the shared values of compassion, selflessness, and support. Together, we can create a lasting impact on the lives of the women and families we serve. Thank you for your unwavering commitment and for being an integral part of the Mary's Hands Network family.

*Madeline LeBlanc*

**President and Founder**





# Meet the 88 Doula Volunteers trained in 2023

**ALPHA** - Cheramie Achee, Kaprisha Adikema, Pamela Adikema, Lynn Agnew, Patricia Brown, Karen Clark, Talisha Davis, Emma Fontenot, Nelda Hunt, Lilliana Johnson, Alyssa Kinchen, Jennifer Leonard, Nanette McCann, Michaelyn McGinnis, Tasha Sibley, Yolander Smith, Glenda White, and Barbara Thomas.

**BETA** - Devon McKnight, Kendra Ross, Angela Gregoire, Taylor Franklin, Jeanne Ard, Cijii Dupont, Diana Mangrum, Tiereny Rowe, Rosemary Peters-Hill, Kra Hobbs, Elizabeth Erikson, Colleen Buras, Malika McGee, Alkinee Jackson, Rashida McKnight, Lorraine Davidson, Bobbie Walters, and Janeen Broussard.

**GAMMA** - Stefan Johnson, Jasmine Johnson, Myisha Morris, Lyric Johnson, Creola Jacque, Nadirah Caine, Brandi Paynes, Jeseke Holloway, Dena Christy, Margaret Evans, Renietta Chatman, Sheran Duncan, Pamela Smith, Deborah Porterfield, Marisa Ramirez, Tylea Davenport, DeAnna Townsel, and Jena' Dennis.

**DELTA** - Rhonda Chube, Linda Clopton, ShaDarrian (Daisy) Langford, Nicole Lanford, Rachel Lanford, Caryl Miller, Elizabeth Roussel, Lindsey Roussel, Sarah Salpietra, Jasmine Smith, Megan Upperman, Alicia Vidrine, Vanessa Williams, Lark Spears, Jenny Thompson, Zoe Thomas, Naomi Peters, and Lucinda Warren.

**EPSILON** - Na'Tasia Bradshaw, Chaunte'y Carter, Entisar Elshawarby, Sanaa Jackson, Tieka Jones, Lara-jeanne Kling, Angela Bell, Kameron Ellis, Lydia Haymond, RaeVyon Jamison, Tiara Ponton, Essence Sherrell, Michelle Tate, Aletha Taylor, Renee Wells, and Kayla Wolf.



# Behind the Scenes

Mary's Hands Network would not be where we are today without the passionate dedication of our two office administrators. Both Marisa and Vanessa began working with the network as volunteers but quickly made themselves essential. We are lucky to have these two on our team and are excited to see what they do next!



Marisa Ramirez  
Administrator  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Gamma Doula Class

Vanessa Williams  
Administrator  
Social Media and Marketing  
Delta Doula Class



# Marisa

“This is such an incredible network and I feel so blessed to be a part of it. Spending my life empowering women and training other women to empower them is an amazing thing to see. I love watching the women grow as doulas and become so passionate about this movement. Meeting moms and getting to match them with the team I curate just for them feels so intimate in a time when they need it most.”



# Vanessa

“The journey with MHN has been truly transformative for me. Discovering ways to support women during pregnancy has not only imparted wisdom but also fostered a sense of community. I’ve come to understand that the greatest gift I can give to my community comes from within. It’s the investment of my time, my energy, and my talents. Despite my age and relative inexperience in the birth world, I have been able to provide uplifting compassionate care to my clients. Being part of the support team is an unparalleled experience. Through MHN I’ve cultivated lifelong connections and gained skills I will utilize and cherish my whole life.”



# Professional Doulas in our Network

We pride ourselves on the exceptional quality of our training program, which serves as a robust foundation for a fulfilling career. At Mary's Hands Network, our commitment to excellence is underscored by accreditation from the International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA). It's imperative for all our volunteers, regardless of prior certifications from other organizations, to complete our comprehensive training.

Our volunteers not only receive thorough preparation but are also actively encouraged to pursue professional doula certification if they so desire. Within our network, we boast a wealth of seasoned professionals who generously mentor newcomers to the birth community.

Central to our ethos is the belief that empowered women empower others. Our overarching vision is to ensure that every woman desiring a doula receives one. To achieve this, we require both an increase in volunteer numbers and a growth in professional doula presence. There exists no spirit of competition; rather, our environment fosters mutual support and empowerment as we collectively strive toward our shared goals.

The demand for doulas far exceeds the current supply, and it is incumbent upon us to meet this need. We take immense pride in nurturing and guiding every volunteer along their doula journey, whether they ultimately choose to pursue a professional path or remain dedicated volunteers.



Jenny Thompson  
Delta Doula Class  
[www.lafayette-lamaze.com](http://www.lafayette-lamaze.com)



Zoe Thomas  
Delta Doula Class  
[zoethomas.doula@gmail.com](mailto:zoethomas.doula@gmail.com)





Tasha Sibley



Alyssa Kinchen

Alpha Doula Class  
[www.touladoula.com](http://www.touladoula.com)



# Meet Honey the Doula



Being a Doula is like being the heart of a village, beating steadily and nurturing life around it. The expecting mother, the newborn, and the family are the villagers, each with their unique roles and experiences in the journey of birth. As the 'heart', I am the central pillar of support, pumping love, guidance, and care to every corner of this village. The process of birth is a village's journey, and I am there to accompany them through every twist and turn. I bear witness to the miracle of birth, providing comfort and support, much like how the heart nourishes the body with every beat it takes.

My role extends beyond the moment of birth like the heart continuing to support the body long after a challenge has been overcome. I offer postpartum care, overnight baby care, and meal preparation, ensuring the village thrives until the mother feels ready to take over. Just as the heart uses its rhythm to maintain life, I use my ears and heart to listen and provide emotional support to mothers.

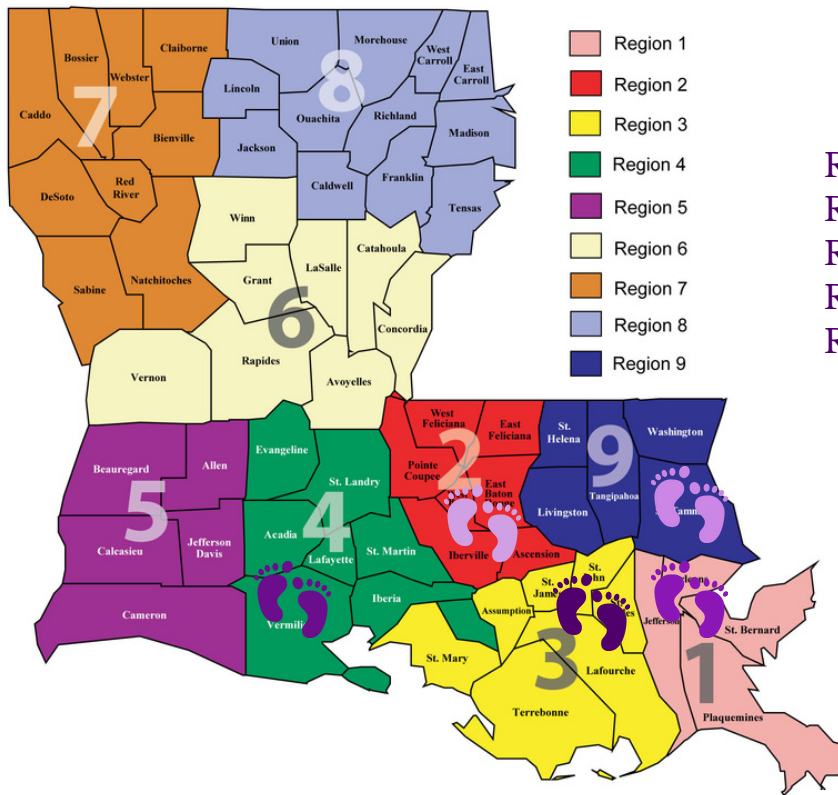
I am a firm believer in the power of prenatal health, much like how a village thrives when its heart is healthy. A healthy heart promises the well-being of the village, just as a healthy mother promises a better outcome for her and her baby. This work is my passion, it's what I was naturally made to do - to be the heart of these villages, to guide them through their journey of motherhood.

By: Sheran Duncan "Honey the Doula"  
Gamma Doula Class



# Expanding the Network

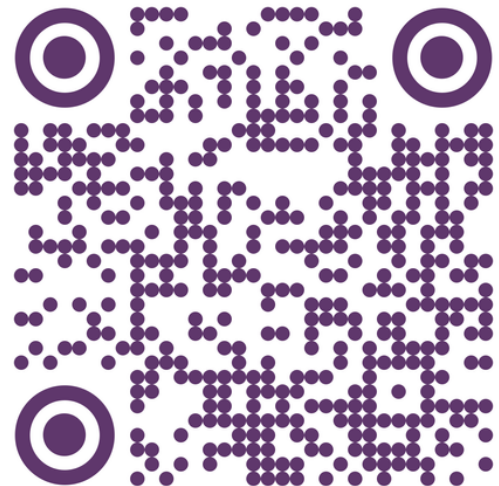
We're taking "baby steps" to spread the mission of Mary's Hands Network to women all across the state.



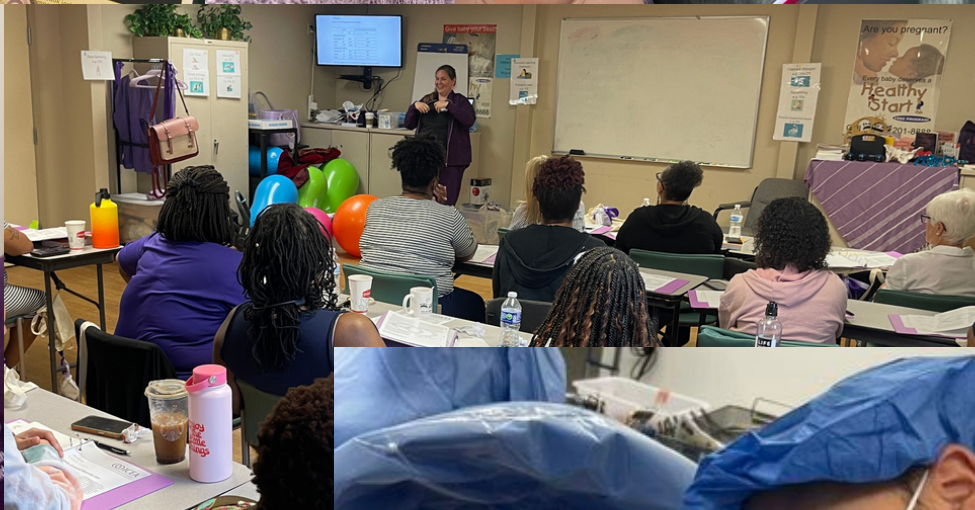
Region 2 - East Baton Rouge  
Region 9 - Livingston  
Region 4 - Lafayette  
Region 3 - Terrebonne  
Region 1 - Orleans

Bring Mary's Hands  
Network to your region.  
**Donate NOW!**

All donations are tax-deductible  
and directly support the mission of  
Mary's Hands Network.









# Thank You to our Community



Baton Rouge General



International Childbirth Education Association



The Roman Catholic Diocese of  
**BATON ROUGE**  
OFFICE OF LIFE, PEACE & JUSTICE



**WOMEN'S HELP CENTER**  
*Help. Hope. Healing.*



**Louisiana**  
FOUNDATION



SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA  
**LEGAL SERVICES**  
Free Legal Aid for Low-Income People



BATON ROUGE  
**PERINATAL**  
COUNSELING





KEVIN HARRIS  
ARCHITECT, LLC



WOMAN'S  
NEW LIFE CLINIC



**Ochsner**<sup>TM</sup>  
Health System



Birth  
Center

of Baton Rouge



Acacia  
church

VIVACIOUS  
*women's wellness*



Woman's



A Caring Season Doula

★ ★ ★  
Lafayette  
Lamaze

★  
GENTLE  
WOMAN  
BIRTH SERVICES



CATHOLIC  
CHARITIES  
DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE

# Our Administrative Team

## **Madeline LeBlanc, MHA**

Founder and President  
ICEA Birth Doula Instructor

## **Elizabeth Harris, JD**

Secretary and Treasure

## **Toni Myer, EdD**

Interim Vice President

## **Marisa Ramirez**

Administrator  
Volunteer Coordinator

## **Vanessa Williams**

Administrator  
Social Media and Marketing

Baton Rouge, LA 70806  
[www.maryshandsnetwork.org](http://www.maryshandsnetwork.org)  
[hello@maryshandsnetwork.org](mailto:hello@maryshandsnetwork.org)  
[@maryshandsnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/maryshandsnetwork)  
[@typeofahandful](https://www.instagram.com/typeofahandful)

# Community Supporters

## **Training Hosts:**

The Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge  
Restoration Christian Center  
Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge  
Baton Rouge General Medical Center  
Louisiana Healthcare Connections  
EBR Parish Library System

## **\$500 +**

Stephan and Ethan Klimczak  
Aimee and Craig Klimczak  
Kevin and Liz Harris  
Randall and Patricia Waguespack  
Jerry and Marilyn Harris

## **Community Supports:**

Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge Office of Life, Peace, and Justice  
The Women's Help Center  
Acacia Church  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Louisiana Foundation

# Meet the Advisory Board

## **Deacon Randall Waguespack**

Deacon serves as a permanent deacon at St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland Catholic Church and as Director of the Diocesan Office of Life

## **Elizabeth Fontenot, CNM**

Elizabeth is the Clinical and Executive Director of the Birth Center of Baton Rouge

## **Dr. Jordan Ellis, Ph.D.**

Dr. Jordan holds a Ph.D. in Nursing Education and Administration and has a wealth of knowledge in research, grant writing, and course development



# REFERENCES



Alyssa Kinchen, ICBD

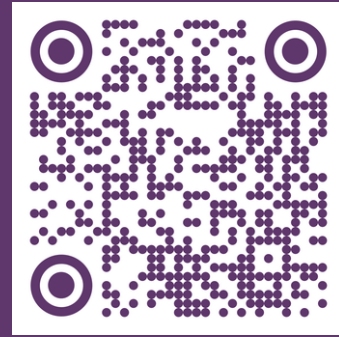
Alpha Class  
First Mary's Hands Network  
Doula to take and pass the ICEA  
Certified Birth Doula (ICBD)  
examination.

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# Donate Now

## SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

All donations are tax-deductible and directly support the mission of Mary's Hands Network.



A screenshot of the Mary's Hands Network website. The header features the logo and navigation links: HOME, OUR TEAM, FOR MOMS, FOR DOULAS, SIGN UP / REGISTER, and DONATE NOW. The main image shows a pregnant woman lying down with hands resting on her belly. A white box on the left contains the phone number 225.424.7532, the organization name, and a 'DONATE NOW' button. A quote at the bottom reads: "A doula is a warm body, in the room, who cares; and that makes all the difference in the world."

[WWW.MARYSHANDSNETWORK.ORG](http://WWW.MARYSHANDSNETWORK.ORG)

Stay up to date on all things Mary's Hands Network Including training days, and community events, and follow our progress one woman at a time.

## KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST UPDATES

