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PRESS RELEASE

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DONA CELEBRATES ITS 11TH YEARS OF EXCELLENCE WITH DOULA EVENTS FOR PARENTS AND MATERNITY CARE PROVIDERS

Doulas of North America (DONA), an international non-profit organization of over 4,500 professional labor and postpartum assistants, celebrates its eleventh year of excellence. DONA members will be honoring the parents and maternity caregivers in their communities that have welcomed and supported doula care for childbearing families. DONA is sponsoring International Doula Month all through May.

DONA, was founded in Seattle, Washington in 1992 to improve the quality of maternity care and health of newborn babies by providing education and emotional support for women during their pregnancy, birth, and postpartum and by furthering the profession of labor support. For the last decade, DONA's excellent, evidence-based training and certification program has set the standard for doula training programs in hospitals, community-based maternity services and educational institutions.

For many doulas, supporting women in childbirth is a labor of love. Birth doulas are trained to provide continuous emotional support, physical assistance, and facilitate communication between the laboring woman, her partner and her medical caregivers. Doulas help laboring women with relaxation, pain coping techniques, effective positions and movements to help labor progress. They encourage women to trust their bodies and the process of birth. Doulas assist women and their partners to achieve the birth they want in the hospital, birth center, or at home. They have been at the mother's bedside through medicated, non-medicated and cesarean births. Today, doula care provides the laboring mother with the physical and social support that women in many cultures have historically enjoyed and valued.

Studies have shown doula-assisted women in labor have fewer complications, request fewer epidurals, have fewer cesareans and healthier babies. There is also evidence to show that mothers who are nurtured throughout labor and immediately after birth are more likely to appreciate their newborn, breast feed longer, and are less likely to suffer from postpartum depression.

Improved health outcomes for mothers and babies associated with continuous emotional support in labor have been recognized by the World Health Organization, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist, hospital associations and health care policy makers. Continuous emotional support for laboring women is becoming an essential component to improving the quality of maternity care and increasing satisfaction with birth services.

Continuing in its tradition of providing a high quality birth doula training program, DONA has announced last year the establishment of an evidence-based Postpartum Doula Training and Certification program in response to the needs of childbearing families and doulas who have been providing at-home services to new mothers. Postpartum doulas provide the guidance and support that young families traditionally received from experienced mothers in their community. They encourage new mothers to feel confident in their ability to care for their infants. They assist with the newborn's feeding and bathing, light housework, meal preparation, and encourage new parents to recognize and appreciate their infant's special abilities.

DONA members will be celebrating DONA's Eleventh Anniversary in May with parents and maternity care providers in their communities. They have planned educational events, picnics, film showings, book donations, nurse appreciation days and maternity teas.

To find out about local doula activities, locate doula services, or learn more about becoming a birth or postpartum doula, visit the DONA website, www.DONA.org. You may also call DONA toll free at (888) 788-DONA, e-mail askdona@DONA.org, or write to DONA at PO Box 626, Jasper, IN 47547.