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IN MIDTOWN, MIDWIFERY ON THE RISE

Late on Tuesday, Sept. 25, local licensed midwife Jill Adams delivered her 382nd baby since becoming certified in 2007.

Located on First Avenue South and 26th Street in Midtown, Naturally Nurturing Midwifery Services looks like most other tree-shaded, single-family homes on the block save for the large sign in the front yard. Inside the house there is a prenatal center where Adams meets with clients in the months leading up to their delivery.

Specializing in water births, Adams loads her inflatable, heated spa pools and baskets of delivery materials to her car and promptly makes her way to the scene of the birth as soon as she receives the call. Her most recent delivery didn’t end until close to 4 a.m. Adams said she spent the following day like the new mother and child – resting and recovering.

"Pregnancy is not a medical condition; it's natural," Adams said. "America has capitalized on birth."

This philosophy contributed to her decision to attend The Florida School of Traditional Midwifery in Gainesville in 2001. Of the 18 students who started out in her program, four completed the training, and two are now practicing. Those numbers differ greatly from the program's current attendance, with classes consisting of 25 to 30 students.

According to the Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health, in 2009, 8.1 percent of all U.S. births were attended by midwives, which is an unprecedented high in the country's history.

Pam Eaton, the director of women's services at St. Petersburg General Hospital, said at "St Petersburg General Hospital, one of the service lines offered to patients include obstetrics. The Providers obtain privileges to practice obstetrical care at this facility. One of the groups of providers that have obstetrical privileges at St Petersburg General Hospital include certified midwives. This group of Providers is All Children's OBGYN Specialists. Currently there are three Certified Midwives within this practice with obstetrical privileges at St Petersburg General Hospital."

Adams travels as far as Manatee and Pasco counties to deliver babies and at any given time maintains between 15 and 20 clients. She said she has never required an emergency transfer for a mother; and only one for a baby Adams resuscitated prior to the transfer.

"Every intervention is a complication. Simply inducing [labor], the body’s not ready – the baby's not ready," Adams said. She said childbirth is all about choices, and that hospitals take too many choices away from expectant mothers.

"We practice safely; take care of our clients. We practice preventatively," Adams said.

For weeks before the actual delivery the client is educated on the process of childbirth. Once the birth is underway Adams and her assistants take care “massaging, hugging, bathing and emotionally and verbally supporting” the mother and family until the newborn is safely received.
“Every birth is a miracle, and I’m honored to be a part of that miracle.”

Adams explained the midwife and assistants are required by the state to stay a minimum of two hours after the birth, and that she holds two post-partum meetings with the family. But many of the relationships Adams has built have lasted much longer. She says the customer to client relationship is one of the advantages over a hospital delivery. Adams wants to turn her Midtown home into a birthing center so her clients can come to a delivery environment that would be better equipped than their homes.

Since she was 10-years-old, Adams has lived in St. Petersburg and never in her adult life been more than a few miles from the rest of her family. Of her four children and six grandchildren only one was delivered by a midwife – but not by Adams, though she was certified at the time.