

# Midwife loves 'magnificence' of life

By **JESSE SENDEJAS**  
Chronicle correspondent

Sarah Green admits she's never viewed the pink-tile bathroom in her Westbury home the same as she did before January 2001.

That month, she gave birth to her son, Thomas, in the room's

## Faces in the crowd

bathtub.

"It makes you not want to move," she laughed, reflecting on the birth. "I'll never re-tile my pink bathroom."

Green's delivery at home wasn't a last-minute, too-late-to-dash-to-the-hospital emergency. Instead, it was a pre-planned home birth, with certified nurse-midwife Pat Jones overseeing the pregnancy, labor and delivery.

Since 1979, Jones has been providing Houston-area families an alternative to traditional, hospital-based births. She's operated from her offices at Women's Health and Birth Care at 1826 Portsmouth since 1987.

Jones, 61, has attended over 1,300 births since beginning her career as a self-taught, direct-entry midwife and, later, as a Baylor College of Medicine certified nurse-midwife.

While every birth experience is different, she said, they all share one thing in common — the types of parents who seek Jones' expertise and help.

"Most of them are in their 30s and early 40s, well-educated, they've done their careers and now they want to be parents," she said. "They are people who want to take responsibility. They don't want to give their body and their baby over to someone else. They want to make their choices and take the risks they choose to take."

Jones said those risks are no greater than the risks associated with hospital births, and may be even less.

"Every study shows that," she said. "The literature is very clear. When they look at planned home birth with trained care providers, birth is safer at home than in a hospital."

Some clients are driven to midwifery by what they perceive to be intrusions to their birth experience. For example, Jones said, she's performed just one epi-



Kim Christensen photo

Midwife Pat Jones, talks with parents as Connor Hrachovy, 11 months, center, and Callsta Kiper, 1, listen at Jones' office at Women's Health and Birth Care in the Montrose area.

siotomy in over 1,300 deliveries and considers them medically non-necessary. An episiotomy is an incision into the perineum to make room for the baby's head.

Jones said her rate of cesarean deliveries — actually handled by consulting physicians with whom she works — is less than 6 percent. The World Health Organization's acceptable rate is 11 to 13 percent. In the United States, the annual rate of births by C-section is 25 percent, according to the WHO.

Jones said she prefers to start pre-natal care with parents early in the pregnancy. Her first visit is a three-hour session filled with lab work, health examinations and a question-and-answer session that new parents particularly appreciate. Ensuing visits are about an hour long, Jones said.

"My experience at the doctor's office was waiting about 45 minutes in the office and then having about a three-minute visit with the doctor," Green said. "So, I was pleased and relieved to have so much time (with Jones)."

About 40 percent of Jones' clients are first-time parents, like Green. She's had return clients, and attended the births of nine children in one family alone.

Not every birth has gone as planned, Jones said. One woman, whose labor failed to progress, was being spirited to the hospital when the baby suddenly decided to arrive. Jones delivered the baby in the parents' car, parked

at a fire station, at 11 p.m., a block away from the hospital.

It's not often she and the expecting parents lose control of a situation, which is precisely why people like Green seek midwives.

"During my labor, I was in my environment and I was the boss of my environment," Green said. "No one was going to tell me you can't do this or that. I was comfortable. It was my house and I didn't have to worry about what people thought of me because everyone there loved me and supported me."

Jones said that wasn't the case when she birthed her own four children.

"I think that served me, that I didn't get the birth I wanted. I think it's made me be a midwife," she said.

Delivering babies safely to their parents at their homes has been especially rewarding, Jones said. She's seen common rooms — like Green's pink-tiled bathroom — become "sacred, almost magical places."

"I love what I do," she said. "I get to fall in love with people, I get to serve them and I get to see the magnificence of life beginning."

If you have a suggestion for a "Faces in the Crowd" profile, contact Harlesica Wooten at [harlesica.wooten@chron.com](mailto:harlesica.wooten@chron.com) or send a fax to 713-220-7552.