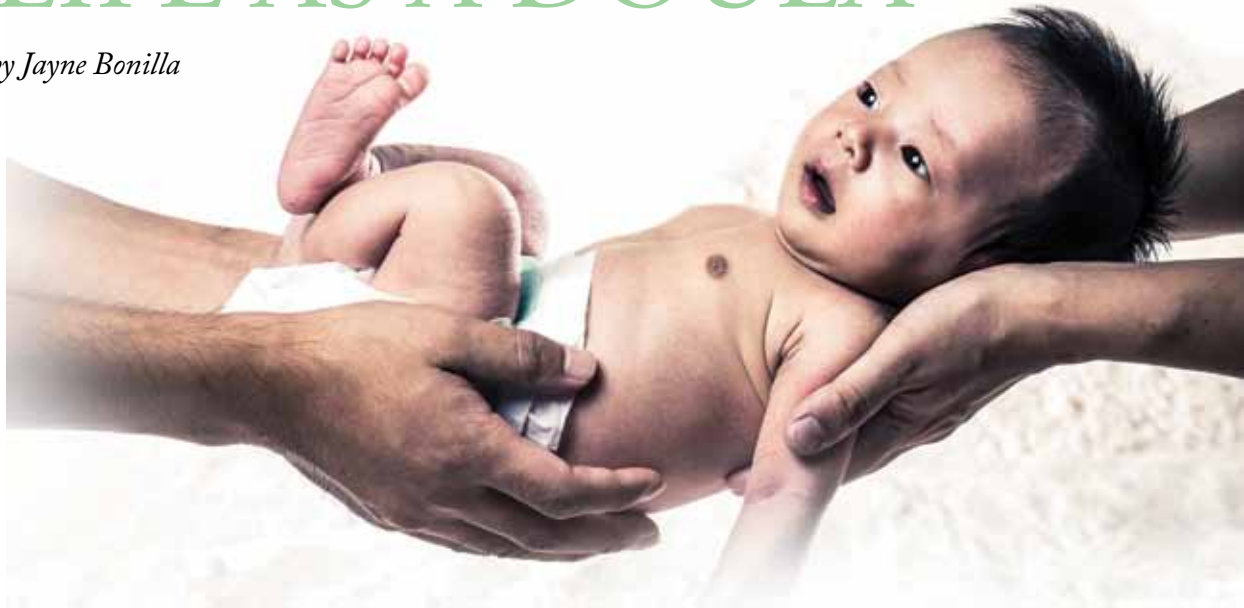


A Labor of Love

LIFE AS A DOULA

by Jayne Bonilla

The absolute greatest three days of my life was when each of my children were born. It's as if I took my first breath when each of my children inhaled for the first time.



Motherhood defines me and endlessly gives me my purpose for being. I loved being pregnant. While each of my pregnancies was different, with accompanying waves of worry and concern, I found comfort in my growing belly, sonograms, hearing the heartbeat, and every wiggle, kick, and movement that registered. I had a wonderful support system. A devoted husband, an amazing OB/GYN, and my experienced mom, all who gave me the reassurance needed throughout each nine-month journey. "Women have been giving birth since the beginning of time," my mom would remind me. This reminder from the woman who was "knocked out" during my birth while my dad paced in the waiting room until hearing "it's a girl!"

Fortunately, times have changed when it comes to being "present" during the birthing process, for both moms and dads. I know how lucky I am having a support system, but many women do not. Whether living far from family or just wanting to chart a childbirth course different from their mother's, women have many more choices during their personal nine-month journey.

"The pendulum is swinging back to a time when natural births are healthier,"

said Martha Lerner, CLD, or CAPP Labor Doula. Martha, a devoted mother, and certified doula, should know since she has been an integral part of this resurgence. She became a CAPP Certified Doula in 2014. So, "what is a doula?" I was wondering as well. The word doula is a Greek word meaning women's servant.

CAPP, which stands for Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association, is an international certification organization for Doulas, Childbirth Educators, and Lactation Educators. Doulas fill an important role in providing emotional, physical, and evidence-based informational support to the birthing woman and her family before, during, and after birth. According to cappa.net, CAPP Labor Doulas are skilled support persons who act as consultants and resources, not clinicians.

Martha Lerner of zenmamalove.



A doula can help support the entire family by teaching fathers what comfort measures help alleviate the laboring woman's discomfort. Photograph by Viviana Puga