





‘Doula’ helps moms adjust to life with baby

BY STEVE GIBBS

Free Press Staff

TAVERNIER — Tanisha Walters, 32, sat quietly on her Plantation Key living room couch last Friday nursing her 34-day-old infant, Kaia Belle.

Walters may not have been as settled and comfortable in her role as a new mother if Christine Moss, 59, had not been there to help offer advice and instill confidence.

Walters is an acupunc-

turist whose family lives in Mississippi, while husband Zack, a fishing guide, has family in Georgia.

Even though Tanisha’s mother came down to be with her daughter during Kaia’s birth, the two new par- ents are mostly on their own when it comes to raising their new child.

That’s where Moss comes in. As a certified postpartum doula, she serves as a calm- ing influence for both new moms and dads. She offers advice, companionship and nonjudgmental support dur- ing what she calls “the fourth trimester.” The word “doula” comes from the ancient Greek, meaning “a woman who serves”.

“Babies don’t come with a manual, but you can cer- tainly have a postpartum doula,” Moss said. “I support families with newborns by providing education, instruc- tion and helping new moms get through the ‘baby blues’ – postpartum depression.

“A week or so after Kaia was born I sat down with Tanisha and asked her if she was experiencing any sadness,” Moss explained as Walters nursed her baby nearby. “Her eyes welled up with tears and I assured her that the feel- ing are normal. A woman’s hormones flip after she gives

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certified postpartum doula

birth. Most mom’s have a cry- ing spell about a week after giving birth.”

Walters smiled in affirma- tion of Moss’ statement.

Moss explained that she is not a nurse and does not offer medical care.

“I’m here for the family,” she said.

Besides helping new mom’s to cope, providing an all-too- important education for new parents and running errands, Moss is a breast-feeding counselor as well.

“She helped me with breast-feeding by showing me how to pump milk and the proper way to save it so

Zack can feed Kaia,” Walters said. “She showed me how to use the pump, what the proper quantities are, how to freeze the milk, defrost it and heat it — never to let it boil — and how to properly store breast milk. I would have never known all this.”

Moss also provides new mothers with needed breaks and helps get them back into a normal routine as part of her service.

“I was able to leave for an hour last week to run errands while Christine was with Kaia,” Walters said. “I felt more comfortable with Christine here. She has great tips on how to calm the baby. [Kaia] was having a diaper rash problem and Christine helped with that, as well as helping when Kaia had reflux

STEVE GIBBS/Free Press

New mom Tanisha Walters says she has learned a number of useful child-rearing tips from her doula, Christine Moss.

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and was belching up food. Amy Cornaire, a web designer and new mother of twins, said Moss was a god-send who provided a much-needed extra hand after her mother, who had come down for a month to help care for the newborns, returned to Maine.

Moss also helps parents deal with potential problems before they fester.

“Second-time moms need to change their focus from the first child to the new infant,” she explained. “It is important to make sure the older child doesn’t feel rejected and resentful of the newborn.”



Moss, who was Miss Coral Shores in 1969, has come full circle from being a mother of two daughters to helping others raise their own children.

She had a demanding career in between.

“I was an import buyer in Margate, Florida, for a Taiwan ceiling fan company. When they sold out I moved to Greenville, South Carolina, and opened a distribution center for the United States. Then I opened eight ceiling fan stores in Maryland and Northern Virginia,” she said.

But she is happy to be where she is now, serving as a doula with a newborn snuggled against her last Friday afternoon. Kaia also seemed content.

“This is where she wants to be,” Moss said. “She wants to be next to your chest so she can hear your heart beat.”

Moss charges \$25 an hour for her services but says she is sensitive to the financial needs of different families. Call her at (305) 394-3735 for more information.
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