

Previous Student, Instructor & Models Testimonials

Students

"I couldn't have asked for a more all-encompassing experience than what I got at Sacred Mountain. By grasping the delicate balance of art and science, calm and vigilance, confidence and humility, Sarita and Ruth Ann were able to teach what seems to be the unteachable part of midwifery. I not only walked away from this experience with a completely new and holistic concept of midwifery care and the confidence to begin my apprenticeship, but with a new appreciation for the beauty of birth and life as well. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of something so wonderful. Enjoy the hands-on instruction, camaraderie, jewels of wisdom, sacred space, gorgeous scenery, delicious food, songs and lots and lots of laughter."

– *Chelsea Monday 2010*

“What an opportunity it was for me, a wife and mother of 6 who home schools and runs two businesses, to be able to attend Sacred Mountain Midwifery School one weekend a month for 8 months. This school was designed to help women, like me, who want to continue their studies for midwifery but enable us to do it on a schedule that meets the needs of our first priority, our family.

Dr. Sarita Bennett, DEM and Ruth Ann Colby-Marin, CPM are admirable instructors who kept the tradition of holistic midwifery in mind when teaching the intensive sessions which were based off of the Practical Skills Guide for Midwifery book by Pam Weaver and Sharon Evans. This 8-month school was not only geared toward covering all the aspects of this book, but much more.

The tradition and spirit of the ‘apprenticeship model’ of learning and gaining ‘hands-on skills’ are upheld with great care with utmost respect for

alternative means of acquiring midwifery knowledge and experience. The location of the school itself, The Mountain Institute, is a conducive environment for soaking up all the rich material that needs to be covered throughout the weekends.

The bonds created by the students during the sessions are valuable for building relationships with clients and other colleagues in the midwifery field. Over all, it was a well-spent investment that I would not hesitate to encourage others to take advantage of. I am forever grateful to the Sarita and Ruth Ann for taking the time and being passionate about bringing more midwives into our communities to serve women and their families during childbearing and beyond!”

–Doran Richards, 2009

Attending Sacred Mountain Midwifery School was both a challenging and fulfilling experience. I had been involved in birth work for many years – working as a doula, teaching childbirth classes, even apprenticing with a midwife. But I seemed to periodically lose sight of the vision of my ultimate goal of becoming a midwife. Sarita and Ruth Ann helped refocus this goal and, gently but insistently, nudged me along toward it throughout the course of our studies. Even as they encouraged and prodded me to challenge myself, they continuously refueled me in multiple areas along the way.

Academically, our engaging, expert, and entertaining instructors supplied clear and accessible information. They provided practical hands-on learning, as well as theory and book learning. Perhaps most satisfying of all, they demystified the Portfolio Evaluation Process for me!

I was also sustained emotionally. Each student was at a different place on her path and yet, unequivocally and without judgment, Sarita and Ruth Ann met each of us wherever that was. We received personalized goal planning on a monthly basis. We gathered in a beautiful, serene and nourishing location. We left the demands of home life behind us and reveled in our freedom to focus on our studies.

Additionally, our social needs did not go unrealized. The community that we created was, and remains, extremely valuable to all of us. We became peers and friends, we let our guard down, we used one another as sounding boards (and more), we developed trust, and we laughed! And laughed!

And the final refueling I'll mention is the literal one. We were so well fed that we often joked that the midwifery was actually secondary to the delicious and wholesome breakfasts, lunches, and dinners!

Clearly, I loved my time at SMMS. It was bittersweet to see it draw to an end. So much progress had been made, but our time together was over. The friendships we cultivated will continue to bloom and grow, hopefully, for many seasons to come. I would highly recommend SMMS to anyone interested in furthering her midwifery education.

–Melaine Copeland, 2009

Once I began to become serious about pursuing my goal of becoming a midwife, I began a home study course. Without an opportunity for an apprenticeship, I had to find ways to gain hands-on experience. I jumped at the chance to attend Sacred Mountain Midwifery School. I was not disappointed! While I was there I had the chance that I was looking for, to practice hands-on skills that reading alone cannot duplicate. I also enjoyed the lecture portions of the course, Sarita and Ruth vividly explained topics that had until then had been flat for me. Suddenly, I felt that I not only had studied, but that I understood! During the course I did end up with an apprenticeship and found that what I had learned was invaluable. I know that I will continue to draw on what I have learned in the years ahead.

What I was not really searching for, but am forever grateful for, is the friendships and connections that I have made. I drove five hours each way to get to Sacred Mountain, and feel strongly that it was worth it! I learned a lot about myself in the process and feel that I am much stronger in my convictions than I ever was. I look forward to the chance to be able to come back to Spruce Knob for the retreats to reconnect with my friends! Thank you Ruth Ann and Sarita...you have made a huge impact on my life! I know

that I will be a better midwife because of the time I spent in beautiful surroundings learning about a subject that I am so passionate about with like-minded women.

–Bettie Sheets, 2009

Get midwifed into midwifery! That is my experience with Sacred Mountain Midwifery School. During an intense study course over an eight-month period consisting of a three day stay at The Mountain Institute on Spruce Knob, West Virginia, I came away with a wealth of information and experience in the basic skills of midwifery. It was also a learning experience rich in personal nurturing care and attention to my needs as a student and midwife-in-training. I have acquired the solid foundation I need to see me through to becoming a responsible, caring midwife. However the truth is even if I never went on to become a certified midwife, I have emotionally and mentally reaped very valuable information that has made me a better person.

My experience was WELL worth the time and money invested.

–Jean Pfau, 2009

Guest Instructors

It was a joy to share breastfeeding information with such a caring group of women who were eager to learn how to help new mothers succeed with nursing their babies.

–Gina Hinkle, MS, CLS, IBCLC

Guest Models

I don't even know where to begin! Participating in the Sacred Mountain Midwifery School was no small blessing in my life. I felt honored to be able

to share my pregnant belly, my body, and my baby with these women as they journeyed on the path to become midwives. These women nurtured me with their honesty, candor, love, and strength during my pregnancy and post-partum months.

When I went to the school after Ian was born, I was nervous, tired, and hormonal. Instantly-they lifted me up. With open and eager faces, they asked for my birth story. They offered words of praise and comfort. They gently encouraged me to let “my own light shine” when I felt dim and worn out. Through these diverse and wise women, I learned that I had my own wisdom to offer through my birthing and mothering experiences.

With Ruth Ann and Sarita’s guidance, I was able to birth my third son at home in the comfort of my own bed. My first son had been born in a hospital with a beautiful and gifted midwife. My second son was born in a birthing center with a wonderful midwife who had cared for me during both of my pregnancies. My pregnancy with my 3rd son was unexpected and stressful (in fact, it should not have been possible), and I felt limited in my choices. Because of location, my former group of midwives and the birthing center were not an option. I did not want to go back to the sterile, commanding, and interfering hospital environment to have my baby. I asked for another choice, and I was lead to Ruth Ann and Sarita. As I developed a relationship with these women through my prenatal care, they empowered me to know and believe that I was a strong, capable, and intelligent woman making the right choices for me, my baby, and my family.

I have no doubt that the women who are drawn to this school and educated through Ruth Ann and Sarita’s guidance, knowledge, and presence will become fabulous midwives. The presence of both of these women and the Sacred Mountain Midwifery School impacted me in a deep and profound way. I feel a deep sense of pride to be connected with these women and their school.

–Amy Jones, 2009