

# Are You Ready for Guerilla Marketing?



by **Eunice K. M. Ernst, CNM, MPH, DSc(HON), FACNM, ACNM President**

**F**all is in the air. In between the fun of summer we, your Board of Directors and national office staff, have been on a mission to get your professional organization operating as efficiently and effectively as possible. Our Executive Director Lorrie Kline Kaplan is working magnificently with many new and wonderful staff. Jan Kriebs and Helen Varney Burst have organized an extensive network for getting member input on the bylaws revision, which will be sent to the members for a vote before the next Annual Meeting. I've met with Lorrie and staff, as well as with Jim Dalton, our consultant working with us to refocus our work for the members. I was impressed by Jim and am confident that he will help ACNM face the journey that lies ahead. Great progress is being made!

I attended the Program Committee meeting in August as they designed the education program for the ACNM 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting in Boston next year. I have worked on a lot of programs in my day but was never as organized as they are. The Annual Meeting will have great content for everyone as well as a sprinkling of fun. In October, I meet with the Service Directors Network and the Directors of Midwifery Education to learn more about their important work.

There has been activity at both the state and national levels regarding licensure and reimbursement. After 20 years

of continuous effort, Illinois passed legislation to allow birth centers in the state! Pennsylvania became the last state to legislate prescription privileges for nurse-midwives (see article on page 1). We are reaching a "tipping point" for advancing midwifery. Just as evidence-based practice started with obstetrics, health reform must start with the care of mothers and babies. Women make most of the health

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care decisions for their families, and the childbearing years are a natural place to inform and instruct, not only about safe and satisfying childbirth, but on nurturing the health of the family. Women should be in a leading role in health care reform and midwives can provide them with the evidence to do it.

## Become a Guerrilla Marketer!

We can't do it alone. ACNM works with ACOG, APHA, JCAHO, American Association of Birth Centers, and other physician, nursing and midwifery professional organizations. We—and you—also have a responsibility to work at the grassroots level. Several new books, films and theatrical events provide opportunities to propel discussion on the role of midwifery in the health care system. Consider hosting a discussion group on new books like *Born in the USA* by Marsden Wagner; *Pushed* by Jennifer Block; *Birth* by Tina

Cassidy; or *Birth Crisis* by Sheila Kitzinger. Arrange for a fundraiser screening of Ricki Lake's "The Business of Being Born" ([www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com](http://www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com)) or support a local BOLD event, an adaptation of the Broadway play "BIRTH" ([www.birthonlaboraday.com](http://www.birthonlaboraday.com)). This "guerrilla marketing" can keep pace with slick and expensive marketing campaigns if we all commit to participating.

Our marketing message to legislators, providers, consumers and health plans should be that midwifery is different—not less than or more than—the practice of obstetrics. It is an evidence-based and needed component in the delivery of care to women and childbearing families. Put copies of books in hospital call rooms. Make up an abstract and give it to your clients, childbirth educators, student nurses, physicians, hospital nursing staff and administrators. Send birth announcements to your legislators. Form alliances with other providers.

I recently joined old and new friends to celebrate nurse-midwifery education at the University of Florida. Betty Hilliard was honored for her pioneering work in founding the program. Dr. Charles Mahan—a well-known public health obstetrician and pioneer in the development of midwifery and birth centers—described a "gathering storm" of consumer discontent with the delivery of care to women and childbearing families. Dean of Nursing Dr. Kathleen Long praised the work of Alice Poe and her nurse-midwifery faculty for innovative recruitment through collaboration with other institutions. Through perseverance, patience, politeness, and positive energy, the University of Florida achieved a six-fold increase in midwifery program enrollment! In a meeting with the students, extraordinary practitioner and student preceptor Mary O'Meara emphasized these

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## The President's Pen

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same qualities and the important role they have played in her own successes.

When I reflect on my last 50 years, I see these qualities as the necessary characteristics for nurse-midwives. But it's also clear to me that we never do anything alone. Nurse-midwifery would not have happened in Florida without the help of at least one leading public health-oriented obstetrician and a Dean of Nursing who opened the doors of graduate education for midwifery. Nor would the formal education for direct entry midwifery have been established. We have negotiated these alliances across the country. We need to preserve and continue to expand these alliances for all of midwifery because, as Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little - Together we can do so much." **Q**

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