Ballot Questionnaire: Cheri Van Hoover Region 7 Representative

Ballot Question 1: What makes you interested in this position? Why are you running for this office?

It would be a great honor to serve on the ACNM Board of Directors representing the midwives of Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Samoa, Guam, and the Uniformed Services. I am a life-long resident of the West Coast and have lived and worked for many years as a midwife in two of the states included in Region VII; my professional and personal contacts extend into most of the region’s other states and territories. Having grown up in a Navy town, Bremerton, and living in a region with a strong military presence, I understand and value the vital contributions of uniformed midwives. The geography, history, and culture of this region have shaped who I am as an individual and have informed my philosophy of midwifery practice. Throughout my midwifery career, I have been an active member of ACNM. It is my deeply held belief that we must have a strong professional organization if we are ever to achieve my personal vision of midwifery as the dominant paradigm for person-centered healthcare throughout the U.S. Our organization must be diverse and equitable if it is to survive and thrive. My broad background of experience and my ability to listen carefully, hear accurately, and advocate vigorously for justice and inclusion make me an effective representative and leader. I would like to use these skills on behalf of the midwives of Region VII, ACNM, and the communities we serve. We are fortunate that most of the states included in Region VII offer full practice authority for CNMs. We still have work to do, however. Our most populous state, California, has the largest concentration of CNMs in our region but still restricts practice with restrictive supervision language. To date only one state in Region VII, Hawaii, recognizes the CM credential; even in that state, restrictive language prohibits those midwives from practicing autonomously to the full extent of their education. I want to see our region continue to provide leadership and set an example for the rest of the nation in the advancement of midwifery practice. We need full support from the ACNM board in achieving these advances.

Ballot Question 2:  Visit ACNM's Strategic Plan HERE. What part of the strategic plan embodies your personal philosophy?

The core commitments of the ACNM Strategic Plan match the values that have guided and directed my midwifery practice and advocacy efforts throughout my career. The core commitments that resonate most strongly for me are: Diversification & Inclusion – Diversity in the midwifery workforce is essential to the provision of competent caring for individuals and communities. The breadth and depth of our inclusiveness must be informed by the principles of equity and justice. Respectful support for midwives of all races, ethnicities, genders, and paths to midwifery will strengthen our profession. The special needs of midwives who provide care to underserved individuals in rural, inner-city, immigrant, and military communities must be addressed. Leadership Development – I am a strong believer in the saying that “if you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.” This belief has led me to be active in a wide variety of community activities seemingly unrelated to midwifery but where I have always made a point of establishing that the assets I bring to each group are related to my training and experience as a midwife. It has also led me to take every opportunity to advocate for other midwives. For example, when I moved to Washington from California, my master’s degree in midwifery was not acknowledged as meeting the requirement for an MSN degree for state licensure. Although the Board of Nursing said they would grandfather me in because of the date when I was certified as a midwife in California, I persisted in demanding that they accept the master’s of midwifery degree as equivalent. They did, and I thus established a precedent for every other midwife with this degree. An organizational value that I cherish is transparency. The strategic plan says ACNM intends to become more transparent in order to develop a more user-friendly organization. Core principles of my midwifery practice have always included honest communications, respect for all persons, openness to new ideas, and tolerance for difference of opinion. I would employ these core values to enhance open governance as a board member. Evidence-based Practice & Interprofessionalism – The women and families we care for are facing huge problems. Maternal mortality, especially among Black women, is a national disgrace. Opioid use disorder is devastating communities, especially in many rural areas. Access to healthcare is limited by income, geography, immigration status, and an insufficient midwifery workforce. We need to strengthen midwifery research to establish the best approaches to tackling these problems, spearhead evidence-based interventions, and coordinate our efforts with other professionals to provide comprehensive, interdisciplinary solutions. Excellent communications lead to relationships built on a foundation of mutual respect and collaboration.

Ballot Question 3: What ideas do you have for enhancing diversity and inclusion?

This journey will begin with an honest, if painful, process of self-examination. Reflection about the history of nurse-midwifery in the United States is needed. As individuals and as an organization, we must be willing to acknowledge that many of our assumptions may be founded on untruths, half-truths, or distortions that have been filtered through a lens of institutional, systemic racism. To realize the truth, we must rely on both the subjective reports of those who have been excluded and objective research. In the process, many of our founding myths will likely be disrupted. We must have the courage to meet each other with love, listening with open minds and hearts, willing to change in fundamental ways. Our educational programs are key to expanding the diversity of our workforce. It begins with recruitment. Outreach to historically black colleges and universities and other educational institutions that serve a diverse student body should be a priority. Students of color and nontraditional midwifery students must be supported by formal mentoring throughout their midwifery education. Tutoring to assist with academic skills may be helpful. Acknowledging in courses across the curriculum the historical and current impact of racism on health indices and midwifery practice will create a more respectful and empowering learning environment for all students. Alliances and networks with other groups dedicated to reproductive justice and anti-racism work will help us to face uncomfortable realities and engage in constructive actions to build a better future.

Ballot Question 4: What innovation or improvement would you bring to ACNM?

I was an early advocate for appropriate use of emerging technologies to support the mission of ACNM and remain so to this day. Twenty years ago, as a founding member of the Informatics Committee, I pushed for a state of the art website. More recently, I helped the Washington affiliate problem-solve and finally achieve remote access to meetings. As a veteran faculty member for a distance-education midwifery program, I have had the opportunity to explore and refine methods of communication with individuals located all over the country, as well as students in U.S. territories and at military bases in other countries. As a board member, I would be alert to aspects of our website in need of ongoing improvement. I consider enhancement of communication to be the greatest strength of the internet and I would use it to promote greater connection within and between affiliates. I am pleased that ACNM board meetings are now open to members through virtual conferencing. I would be an advocate for continuous improvement in the quality and archiving of these meetings to optimize transparency.