

SCRIPT- BROADCAST Pivoting to Support Expectant Parents

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed almost every experience of everyday life, including one of the most important milestones – the birth of a child.

It is an especially scary time for pregnant women who worry about getting the support they need during an already challenging time. OSF HealthCare has had to pivot from in-person classes to develop other ways to make sure would-be moms and dads feel prepared.

At OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center in Galesburg, Carolyn Tomeo, director of the Family Birthing Center, said it was important to come up with a new strategy to make sure parents still received the patient-centered support that is so important with a new baby on the way, particularly during the uncertainty of the pandemic.

SOT- Carolyn Tomeo, director of the Family Birthing Center, OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center (SMMC) Galesburg, IL

“Education is a huge part of that. We want our patients to feel prepared when they come and prepared when they take that new baby home with answers to questions and all the resources we can give them and to know that we are here for them.” (:15)

Registered nurse and Patient Educator Coleen Martinson devised an online version of the birthing classes she offered, breaking the material into three parts.

What’s the most popular section?

SOT-Registered nurse and Patient Educator Coleen Martinson, OSF HealthCare SMMC

“What to expect once you get to the hospital although a large part of Part One tells you when to come and things to look for and I think that’s important too.” (:08)

The class also covers the important topic of birth plans. Martinson offers practical advice.

SOT-Registered nurse and Patient Educator Coleen Martinson, OSF HealthCare SMMC

“Don’t set unrealistic expectations for your birth/labor because when you do, it sets you up to be disappointed that it didn’t work the way you had planned in your mind.” (:08)

Martinson has added a virtual tour of the Family Birthing Center and video and audio clips with experts covering a variety of subjects to keep the online classes engaging.

SOT-Registered nurse and Patient Educator Coleen Martinson, OSF HealthCare SMMC

“That’s why we taped the videos and put those in and recorded the audio in there to still try and give it a personal touch and not just ‘Hey, this is on-line learning.’” (:07)

In smaller communities with fewer expectant parents, in-person birthing classes are still being held. However, in other communities within OSF HealthCare, those in-person classes were becoming less popular even before the pandemic and planning was underway to shift to an on-line option.

Martinson says people seem to like the option she’s been offering since August.

SOT-Registered nurse and Patient Educator Coleen Martinson, OSF HealthCare SMMC

“Online, it’s unlimited participants. They can view it when they have time. They don’t have to sit down and do it all at one time; they can do a little bit as they have time.” (:12)

Expectant parents are advised to talk to their health care provider about birthing class options in their community because what’s offered can vary by location.