

## Midwife Tonya Diggins provides professional, personal care

When Heidi Jensen first read about Tonya Diggins in Perham Health's *Wellspring* newsletter, she was excited to learn that her local hospital was adding a nurse-midwife to its team of providers. "I really liked what I read about her and the fact that she has five kids of her own," Jensen recalls.

Diggins first started seeing patients at Perham Health on November 27, 2017. Prior to moving to the Perham area, she had been working in Montevideo, Minn., for the past 22 years. The very first week Diggins was in Perham, Jensen set up an appointment to meet with her.

"One of the things that impressed me right from the start was how Tonya always involved my other kids in my prenatal exams," says Jensen. She and her husband, Isaac, have two older children (Evan—age 3 and Kami—20 months). Jensen continues, "Tonya would let Evan and Kami help find the baby's heartbeat and always made sure they felt that they were needed and wanted at the appointments."

Even though this was her third pregnancy, Jensen says she also appreciated the way Diggins made sure to provide her with helpful information throughout her pregnancy. "She

was very thorough about making sure she covered ways to care for myself and the baby. Tonya was adamant that I feel free to call her with any concerns that I had," Jensen says, adding how she felt that Diggins was very genuine in all of the care she provided.

"I am here to educate women about what is normal and what is to be expected. It doesn't matter if it is your first pregnancy or your fifth pregnancy, every pregnancy is different," mentions Diggins. She provides all of her patients with educational information, answers questions when

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Heidi Jensen, holding her newborn son Lucas, takes time for a photo with nurse-midwife Tonya Diggins. One of Jensen's favorite things about having Diggins as a midwife was the way she involved Jensen's two other kids, Evan and Kami, in her prenatal appointments.

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they arise, suggests books that might be helpful, and makes sure women are aware of different resources available to them in the community. By providing as much education as possible before an expectant mother goes into labor, she hopes to help eliminate the fear of the unknown.

"Midwifery is grounded in evidence-based practice and professional standards, along with a deep understanding of the normal, natural events in a woman's lifespan. We approach women's healthcare based on researched evidence and clinical expertise, while also considering a woman's own values," Diggins explains. "Midwives work with women to prepare for pregnancy, provide care through labor and birth, support them as they move into parenthood, and even provide care for their newborn baby. As a midwife, I strive to be a partner in care, not just a provider of care."

When it came time to deliver her baby, Jensen says she was once again thankful for the support she found in Diggins. While she was laboring, Jensen said Diggins would come into the room frequently to check on how she was doing. "Even though I didn't need a lot of coaching, she was willing to help in whatever way I wanted.



Three-year-old Evan Jensen watches carefully as nurse-midwife Tonya Diggins checks on his baby brother.

Tonya helped me to relax, created a peaceful atmosphere, and supported me throughout labor," Jensen says.

Isaac Jensen agrees, "Tonya kept encouraging Heidi that she was doing well and helped her to breathe through the contractions." He says he felt Diggins did an excellent job caring for his wife not only during labor and delivery, but throughout her entire pregnancy as well. "She was always very helpful at answering any questions we had," he mentions.

"The joy of being a midwife is having that philosophy of caring for women during labor," Diggins notes. "I like to be involved with moms during the labor process. I am also ready to help educate them about different interventions should they be necessary."

At 2:08 p.m. on February 10, Isaac and Heidi welcomed their son, Lucas Len Jensen, into the world. Lucas weighed in at 8 pounds, 10 ounces and was 20  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long. The entire labor and delivery process went extremely well.

"In my mind, it was a beautiful process," Diggins comments. "It was a very normal labor and delivery. Heidi also had such strong support from her family. It was a blessing to be able to be there and guide her through the process." Baby Lucas was the second baby delivered by Diggins since she started at Perham Health.

In addition to appreciating the supportive care she received from Diggins, Jensen mentions how thankful she was to be giving birth in one of Perham Health's birthing suites. "I love how spacious the rooms are and how accommodating they are when guests come to visit. My husband also felt very comfortable staying in the room," she says, adding that it was wonderful to have a spa tub in her birthing suite to use after delivery.

Just one week after giving birth at Perham Health, Jensen brought her son back



Perham Health's new nurse-midwife Tonya Diggins, Heidi Jensen, and baby Lucas are pictured in one of the hospital's birthing suites. The spacious suite, complete with a private spa tub, is something Jensen says she appreciated both during labor and when friends and family came to visit after Lucas was born.

to see Diggins for his one-week follow-up appointment. Baby Lucas was doing extremely well, having already gained one pound from his birth weight. "He is such a good baby," Jensen comments with a smile. "He brings a lot of joy to our home."

Jensen says both she and Lucas plan to continue seeing Diggins for all of their future healthcare needs. In addition to her role as a nurse-midwife, Diggins is also a family nurse practitioner. This means she is able to see women and children for illness and well visits, allowing for a better coordination of care for her patients.

"If we have another baby, I would definitely choose Tonya again," Jensen concludes. "I would recommend her to anyone else who is considering her as a midwife. She is kind, compassionate, knowledgeable, and great with my kids."

The feeling of appreciation is mutual, with Diggins sharing how much she enjoyed the opportunity to get to know the entire Jensen family. "Heidi is amazing," she says. "She is a great mother and was very comfortable with pregnancy, labor, and delivery. She has such a lovely family."

# Advance care planning - what's important to you?

## Learn more at upcoming education series

Perham Health is planning a series of education opportunities for community members to learn more about advance care planning. The series includes four informational sessions, starting in April and ending in July.

Advance care planning, or ACP, is an intentional conversation with individuals and their healthcare agent to complete a healthcare directive. The conversation addresses how a patient's values and goals may affect decisions about healthcare. It also provides an opportunity for a patient and agent to talk about potential future healthcare needs.

"This educational opportunity is our first of this kind, with the goal of reaching many community members to promote the value in every adult completing a healthcare directive. We invite all adults to attend this education series," says Jennifer Howey, director of social services at Perham Health. Howey chairs Perham Health's advance care planning strategic team, which consists of Perham Health staff and local community members.

"Perham Health's strategic goal regarding advance care planning addresses education to patients across our continuum," she adds.

Each session of the upcoming ACP community education event will focus on a different topic related to advance care planning. Sessions include:

- **April 3** | [Advance Care Planning 101](#) – Perham Health Social Services  
*What is a healthcare directive and why is it important?*
- **May 8** | [Legal issues for the layperson](#) – Amy Ann Mursu, Lakeview Trust and Estate Law  
*What is a healthcare agent and what authority, rights, and responsibilities does one have?*
- **June 12** | [Steering around the potholes](#) – Perham Health Panel  
*Family dynamics, all opinions are valid, real life scenarios*
- **July 10** | [Arriving at the best decision](#) – Joshua Chapman, MD, Perham Health; Pastor Randy Freund, New Creation Lutheran Church  
*How does this really work, ethical issues, medical diagnosis, advocating for the patient, planning ahead*

All sessions will be held at New Creation Lutheran Church, 295 Coney Street West, in Perham. The sessions will run from 6:30 until 8 p.m. each evening and are free to attend. For additional information, please call (218) 347-1608.

## Welcome Amanda Houghtaling, Certified Nurse Practitioner

Perham Health is pleased to introduce Amanda Houghtaling, APRN, CNP, who joined the Perham Health Clinic March 2. Her addition will enhance expertise and further improve access to care.

As an advanced practice RN and certified nurse practitioner, Houghtaling diagnoses and treats adults and children with a wide range of medical problems. She does well-child exams and adult preventative physicals, in addition to seeing acute concerns and chronic disease management.

Born and raised in Chicago, Ill., Houghtaling's childhood included trips to Minnesota at least once a year for both summer and winter vacations with her mom's family. After a one-year stint in Alaska, she moved to the Fargo-Moorhead area until recently moving to Perham.

Houghtaling attended the University of South Alabama for her Bachelors of Science in Nursing degree as well as attending graduate school there where she received her certification as a Certified Nurse Practitioner.

"My nursing career began at Sanford Health-Fargo in 2003 on the inpatient cardiac unit," says Houghtaling. "I learned to love medicine in that department and was intrigued with continued growth as I challenged myself to learn more." She would transfer to the Family Birth Center unit in 2008 and continue working there until recently receiving her graduate degree. While attending graduate school, Houghtaling took on the role of obstetrics clinical instructor for undergraduate nursing students at North Dakota State University. "I enjoyed being able to be a small part of these future nurses' education and introducing them to that specialized area of nursing."

Houghtaling and her husband, Jeremy, have three children. In her free time, she enjoys arts, crafts, design, listening to music, exercise and shopping.

When asked her philosophy of care, Houghtaling responds education is key. "I enjoy educating others to they can use the information to help make decisions or to ease their mind of concerns or to



Amanda Houghtaling

just understand a difficult concept," she explains. "In the same respect, I like to learn and base practice off of evidence so I can provide the most accurate information and recommendations. I hope to empower people to be strong and healthy by educating and guiding them to make goals and to conquer them."

To make an appointment with Houghtaling at the Perham Health Clinic, call (218) 347-1200.



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# Men's Night

**5:00 p.m.**

## Education & Screenings

- Over 30 health services booths
- Chair massage
- Motorcycle driving simulator
- On-site water testing
- Light meal

**6:30 p.m.**

## The Aging Athlete

Matt Nelsen, MD,  
Sanford Orthopedics

**7:00 p.m.**

## Keynote Speaker

Matt Larsen,  
North Dakota State University  
Director of Athletics

## FREE EVENT

Register at [perhamhealth.org/events-classes/mens-night](http://perhamhealth.org/events-classes/mens-night)  
or call (218) 347-1640.

**Tuesday, April 10 | 5-8 p.m.**

**Prairie Wind Middle School | 480 Coney Street W, Perham**