Volunteer Spotlight

**Our Postpartum Angel Volunteers are vital to Good Beginnings' home support program.
This season, our Volunteer Spotlight is on Karen Hatcher. Read on to learn more about what it means to be a Postpartum Angel!**

Karen and her new granddaughter, Sabine

What motivated you to start volunteering as a Postpartum Angel for Good Beginnings, and what keeps you motivated?

I've always been someone who loves babies. My husband and I have four grown children (two of his, two of mine) and four grandchildren, all who live many states away from where we are in Vermont. I retired from full time work a few years ago and knew that I wanted to spend much of my time volunteering.

I think I saw a post on Front Porch Forum promoting the Postpartum Angel program. I was excited and amazed that Central Vermont had such a thing! I went online and checked out Good Beginnings and immediately applied. Since then I've been matched with three families and volunteered to help out in the office. I really love all that Good Beginnings stands for and delivers to newborn families, and with all of the challenges facing mothers in our country these days, I can't think of a more important organization to be involved with and support.

How has your experience as a volunteer impacted your own perspective on parenting or caregiving?

While babies are still babies and need what babies have always needed– love, care, safety, food, shelter– parenting these days can seem more challenging, at least from what I remember as a new mother in my twenties, forty years ago. There seems to be a lot more pressure to measure and meet benchmarks, to employ the latest technology (so much gear!), and then there's social media and all of what comes with that, some good, some confusing. It just seemed simpler back when I was a new mom.

But there are things I'm learning about that I think, "boy, wouldn't it have been great to know about that back then?" like baby wearing, and some of the new sleeping and feeding approaches, that just weren't a thing all those years ago. I really have enjoyed getting to know young parents and feeling connected to a younger generation of members of my community.

What do you find most rewarding about supporting postpartum families?

The great thing about being a Postpartum Angel is that it's a total win-win situation. I feel like I have gained as much as I've given. For me, being welcomed into newborn families and trusted at a pretty intimate level, well that's just a gift. Spending time caring for babies, well that's just a sweet slice of heaven.

Knowing that I'm part of a whole network of other Angels who are out in the community creating these connections, that's really powerful, too. What we're doing is so needed and important, yet doesn't require more than a few hours a week. There's so much demand for this kind of critical support. I encourage other people to learn more about supporting the program or becoming a Postpartum Angel.

A story...

I've tried to stay connected in some way, either on Facebook or by text, to the families I've worked with. It's fun to watch the babies grow up and to feel like I've been some part of that. I feel so lucky that my very first newborn family was such a great match, that we decided to continue the friendship. Mama and baby have become a part of my family and I am part of theirs.

It's been more than a year since we formally "ended", but every week or so, I'll get a text and a new picture or video of the baby (who is now walking and talking), and we'll plan to have lunch or I'll babysit when there's a need. I love spending time with them and watching the little one master new skills. We're still excited to see each other, strengthening a connection built on those first few months postpartum.