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WEEKEND BREAK



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Rechele Salimone makes meals for her clients that often include soups, stews, broths and teas.

Katherine Lacaze

'It's okay to need help'

Doula creates meal packages for families of newborns

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For The Astorian

Giving birth to a child is a monumental life experience, and it requires a specific type of care. For some parents, the best care might be having someone to speak with as they process emotional, physical and hormonal changes. For others, optimal support might come in the form of a helping hand around the house or a soothing bowl of soup.

Gearhart doula and postpartum caregiver Rechele Salimone seeks to fill these needs, along with a variety of others.

Salimone became a state-certified caregiver in early 2020, contracting with North Star Doula Service to serve families throughout Clatsop County who are expecting a new baby. This spring, she established her own side company, The Nurturing Doula, with an emphasis on postpartum services.

"I'm hoping to raise awareness of the importance of this time," she said, adding it's "okay to need help." "As a mother, I know how hard it is to ask for help. It's okay. We're humans, we're not robots."

Salimone felt a lack of support after the birth of her second child, which inspired her to become a doula. She felt challenged by a mindset that she should be able to handle the recovery and transition back to normal life more easily, especially because it wasn't her first child.

However, that wasn't the case for her, nor is it for every parent. She says many families don't plan for postpartum and there's a lack of external support in the maternal healthcare system as well.

"After the baby is born, there's almost like this drop," Salimone said, adding that a majority of parents go back to their health care provider only a couple of times, and then care stops at six weeks. "That's a big part of why I wanted to do this — to bridge that gap. ... The things I offer to families are things I wish I would have had."

Nourishing the body with meal packages

One aspect of Salimone's business is preparing fresh, nutritious meals for postpartum families. She offers three meal packages that vary in price and quantity. Using the commercial kitchen at the North Coast Food Web in Astoria, she prepares all the meals by hand, guided by the principles of Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems with historical roots in India.

According to Salimone, during the early months of postpartum, there are certain foods that nourish the body to support healing and provide comfort better than others. Salimone focuses on meals and snacks that are nutrient-dense, well-spiced and easily digestible to create warmth in the body, such as soups, stews, broths and teas.

"It is very much like a love language for me," she said.

Families can sign up in advance for a week or more of meal packages, available for Sunday pick-up in Astoria, or delivery in Clatsop County. Family members, friends and neighbors also purchase packages for their loved ones who are expecting. Salimone keeps her services open and flexible, so she can tailor them to the individual needs of cli-



Salimone uses a variety of herbs and spices to enrich the meals she creates for families with newborns.



The Bone Broth Noodle Bowl is a meal Salimone created with chicken bone broth, rice ramen noodles, zucchini, broccolini, liquid aminos and black sesame seeds.

ents, and she finds it rewarding whenever she gets a meal order.

"It feels good to know there are families out there

who see the importance and know they're important and they deserve care," she added.

Providing emotional support

In terms of postpartum support, Salimone will also run errands, do household chores, watch older siblings, prepare meals, provide breastfeeding support and help parents look for resources to cover other needs she can't provide for. An important part of postpartum for many parents is processing and talking about their birth experiences, and Salimone aims to help in that way as well.

"Postpartum is such a monumental life experience, and it deserves specific care," she said. "It's emotional, it's hormonal. It needs a lot of support, and that support can look like so many different things to people."

Additionally, once the coronavirus pandemic has subsided, Salimone hopes to establish a community program for families who are simultaneously experiencing the postpartum phase in order to foster connections and further support.

"Healthy families create healthy communities," she said. "When we support parents and we're open to letting them share their experiences and their hardships and we're able to connect them to different resources, we see more of a thriving community."