

# Medlines

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Leslie Fehan



Mary Lou Reed

## Women's Health & Birthing Center Adds Second Midwife

As more and more expectant mothers consider childbirth alternatives, the demand for nurse-midwives is on the rise across the country. To help meet growing interest in nurse-midwifery services in the Richmond area—and continue offering women a full range of options in choosing their own methods of medical care—the VCU

Health System recently added a second certified nurse-midwife to its Women's Health and Birthing Center practice. Mary Lou Reed joins Leslie Fehan, who came on board as the VCUHS's first nurse-midwife in 1998.

Reed's nursing experience spans more than three decades, and she has been a certified nurse-midwife since 1996. Fehan began her career as a registered nurse in 1985 and became a certified nurse-midwife in 1998. Reed and Fehan have more than 45 years of combined nursing experience and nearly 10 years educating and caring for women as certified nurse-midwives.

Certified nurse-midwives are fully trained and licensed in nursing and midwifery. They provide pregnancy- and childbirth-related healthcare to women from preconception counseling through care during pregnancy and delivery. Their care is firmly founded on the belief that women should have the freedom to experience pregnancy and birth in a safe, satisfying, non-interventive, and supportive environment. Nurse-midwives work with expectant mothers to define this ideal environment for each individual woman and/or her family. Together they create a customized birth plan to meet her emotional, physical, lifestyle, and medical needs.

Though nurse-midwives are not doctors, they work in collaboration with physicians, the extent of which depends on each woman's medical needs. Certified nurse-midwives are trained in the use of medical technology and are able to identify situations which may lead to the need for technological interventions.

In addition to childbirth services, certified nurse-midwives are focused on women's healthcare throughout the life cycle—from adolescence through the postmenopausal years. As such, nurse-midwives also provide general gynecological services, assistance with family planning, health maintenance and disease prevention specific to women, and menopausal care. Certified nurse-midwives can do everything from pap smears and breast and pelvic exams, to screening for and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, to providing education, guidance, and resources about menopause and contraception. In Virginia, certified nurse-midwives are able to prescribe a variety of drugs, including oral contraceptives, vitamins, antibiotics, and hormone replacement therapy.

If you're interested in learning more about the midwifery services of the Women's Health and Birthing Center of the VCU Health System, please call 560-8950.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (804) 828-6284.

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