



# Special Delivery

LOUISE RACINE BASTARACHE

Midwife Louise Racine Bastarache has assisted thousands of mothers as their babies entered the world. She is sought out by pregnant moms from near and far. Her patients travel to Wareham's Tobey Hospital from as far away as Provincetown, Rhode Island and Greater Boston to have their babies with her.

It's no wonder. When she is with you, Louise leans in and makes you feel like the most important person in the world. That careful attention to others makes for a great bedside manner—important when the bedside manner can last as long as 24 hours (or more) of labor and delivery.

The second of nine children, Louise grew up on a farm in Acushnet where her family tended a large vegetable garden and raised animals to eat. Her mother instilled in each of her children the drive to "go out and be someone." After graduating from Boston University, Louise received her nursing degree from Boston College and became a labor nurse. Unhappy with the care that the women were receiving, Louise set out to play a larger role in the birthing process.

Louise earned her Master's degree to become a

and her family returned to Massachusetts and settled into Tobey Hospital where she has practiced ever since. At Tobey, she found a team "with the most empathetic and skillful maternity nurses...[and] consulting physicians supportive of midwifery care," she says.

Midwifery is in a far better place than a century ago when Massachusetts outlawed midwifery in *Commonwealth v. Porn* (we're not making this up!). Since 1989, midwife-attended births in the U.S. have more than doubled from less than six percent to more than 12 percent of all births in 2013, according to the website [www.birthbythenumbers.org](http://www.birthbythenumbers.org).

Louise has testified at the State House on behalf of midwives. She'd probably do more advocacy work if she didn't have the grueling on-call schedule she follows. Because Louise is passionate about making the birthing process as empowering and personal for women as she can, her patients know that she will be there for all of their labor and delivery. At 36 weeks, she'll work with each patient on a birth plan. As soon as a patient calls to tell her that she is heading to Tobey Hospital, Louise heads there too. She won't leave until the baby is born.

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nurse-practitioner and joined an ob-gyn practice. Within a few years, she pursued midwifery through a distance education program developed by Frontier Nursing University, a highly regarded graduate school in Kentucky for nurse-midwifery. For her clinical practicum, she and her husband packed the family up and moved to rural Eastern Kentucky in 1991. For a year, they lived in a trailer in a small mountain town, a place that reminded her of Andy Griffith's Mayberry, where the local prisoner could go to the donut shop in the morning before returning back to his jail cell. There, her kids were exposed to realities they'd never seen before, like seeing others live with dirt floors and no conveniences.

After receiving her certificate of Midwifery, Louise

That dedication to her patients and her inspired care is why people drive long distances for Louise. When one of her patients moved to Somerville, Massachusetts, she decided to stay with Louise despite the complicated calculus of figuring out how to get to the South Coast with unpredictable Boston traffic patterns.

Some people even change their career paths after experiencing Louise's care. Inspired by Louise during her children's births, Medi Thomas went back to school to become a labor nurse. Thomas now works beside Louise at Tobey Hospital. With Louise there, Thomas says "it's like having a home birth, with all the safety of a hospital."

It's not an easy career. But for Louise Racine Bastarache, it makes for an inspired life.