

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## BirthNet Joins the White Ribbon Alliance

In keeping with our mission to educate the public about maternity care issues, BirthNet has joined the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, "an international coalition of individuals and organizations formed to promote increased public awareness of the need to make pregnancy and childbirth safe for all women."

According to the White Ribbon Alliance website, "maternal mortality and disability are not just a problem in developing countries," and the "United States ranks worse than 29 other countries in rates of maternal death." Indeed, a study in the current issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* concluded that "The number of maternal deaths is substantially underestimated when death certificates alone are used to identify deaths."

We at BirthNet are concerned that with the skyrocketing cesarean rate and reduced access to vaginal birth after cesarean, the risk of death from pregnancy-related causes may also increase. "Maternal deaths related to cesarean birth often occur well after the birth and are therefore not always recorded as maternal deaths," said Carolyn Keefe, a cofounder of BirthNet. "The loss of a mother is devastating to the baby and family she leaves behind."

The *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* published a study in 2003 showing that the risk of pregnancy-related death for women who had a cesarean birth was nearly four times higher than those who had vaginal births. BirthNet also supports the International Cesarean Awareness Network's Cesarean Awareness Month in April of each year.

In addition, BirthNet has participated in a presentation of Ina May Gaskin's Safe Motherhood Quilt Project. This project, which is ongoing, seeks to dedicate one square for each mother who died from pregnancy-related causes within one year of childbirth since 1982 – the last year during which maternal mortality is known to have improved.

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For more information about the **White Ribbon Alliance**, go to [www.whiteribbonalliance.org](http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org) and <http://www.whiteribbonalliance.com/usactivities.cfm>.

For more information about **Cesarean Awareness Month**, go to [www.ican-online.org](http://www.ican-online.org)

For more information about the **Safe Motherhood Quilt Project**, go to [www.inamay.com](http://www.inamay.com) or <http://131.103.210.241/>

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BirthNet is a non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the public about maternity care in order to improve it. Childbirth is a normal, natural and profound event in a woman's life. BirthNet's goal is to encourage all women and families to learn about their rights and options. Our primary programs include education in the classroom (high school or college classes), community forums or workshops, and media outreach. BirthNet has endorsed the Mother Friendly Childbirth Initiative and supports the Midwives Model of Care.