



HOW WILL YOUR BIRTH STORY UNFOLD?

Philanthropist and natural birth expert Danialle Karmanos talks with doctors and other health professionals about how the **KARMANOS CENTER FOR NATURAL BIRTH** is a game-changer in empowering parents to own their childbirth experiences.

POWERED BY:



CRAIN'S CONTENT STUDIO
DETROIT

TELL YOUR STORY YOUR WAY: A Personal Note from Danialle Karmanos

Inside the birthing suites at the Karmanos Center for Natural Birth at Beaumont Royal Oak, expectant parents will find a home-like environment, complete with wood floors, cozy furniture and spa-like bath features. They'll also find a journal. Inside the journal, they'll find a handwritten note from philanthropist and center co-founder, Danialle Karmanos. In the note, Karmanos invites the parents to write their birth stories.

Since its inception in 2014, more than 1,400 moms have experienced the center; each has chosen how their story would unfold.

Danialle and her husband, Pete Karmanos, have four sons, ages 7, 9 and 10-year-old twins. Here, in her own words, Karmanos tells her own birth story, which serves as a catalyst for the center.

My birth story begins the day my husband, Pete, and I decided to have a natural birth. It was 10 years ago; I was pregnant with twins. We wanted the twins to be born without any medical intervention, such as pain-relieving medication. I wanted to be more alert and aware of the experience, and I knew I would be more likely to get up and walk around sooner if I went the natural route.

We didn't tell many people about our decision. Back then, it was unconventional, and I didn't want to explain our decision to others until we were on the other side of it.

When I told my obstetrician that I wanted to give birth naturally, he was leery. First of all, he said, there's no way the babies would make it to 32 weeks. He was sure they'd be premature. I remember looking into his eyes and thinking, "Don't say that to me; not only am I going to have them naturally, but they're going to go the whole 36 weeks."

My water broke at home at 36 weeks — and, yes, I was able to have the babies naturally. I delivered them in a cold, austere operating room, because the hospital wasn't equipped with natural birth suites or professionals who were adept at the natural birth process. In fact, the hospital had never seen twins delivered naturally before.

Our next two sons were born at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. Our friends and family were more aware of what natural birth was all about, but they still were curious. I don't think they understood why we chose to go natural again. At Beaumont, we had great resources, an outstanding nurse who pushed me through the transitions and a wonderful obstetrician, but the natural birth process wasn't the norm for them. The boys were born in traditional delivery rooms.

Before I gave birth, I made a joke that if I could reserve a room with a bathtub, I would make a donation to the hospital.

Beaumont officials circled back to me and asked if I wanted to have a conversation about making a gift to the hospital.



Pete and I were already thinking about creating a better and safe option for expectant parents who want to have a natural birth. We are propelled by creating opportunities for people; we both have an inherent desire to advocate for others. Hospitals can be tricky and scary, and deliveries can sometimes be treated like an illness. My husband and I can speak for ourselves, but not everyone can or is comfortable doing so.

That's the essence of my birth story. That's what got me here.

Pete and I wanted to create something new and different, unlike anything that's been done in any hospital in the country. I'm a fan of good interior design, so I wanted to infuse the center with as much beauty as possible. The birthing rooms were inspired by the guestroom at our house; we even selected the same tiles and wallpaper that we have in our home. I wanted



to use warm, rich colors and different textures. Satin throw pillows, velvet curtains — elements that add warmth — adorn the suites. We wanted everything to be welcoming.

But the center is more than just a space. The center has been a game-changer in terms of how the Beaumont medical team communicates with one another. It has also opened communication and inspired education programs about natural birth. We're seeing midwives, doctors and nurses working together in a way that we'd never seen before. All of the professionals on the labor and delivery floor have been impacted by the educational component.

The Beaumont medical team wanted to be at the forefront of advances in and conversations about natural birth. Pete and I, by creating the center, were simply matching their desire with an opportunity.

Earlier this year, I convened a panel of experts and those who have experienced firsthand the center to talk about its journey and impact. My hope is that expectant parents will feel the need to be more empowered after reading this. At the end of the day, it's about having a healthy baby. We're passionate about the fact that you should have a choice on how you want to get there — and how your birth story unfolds.



Cover and page 2 photos, Jenny Risher; photos this page, courtesy Beaumont

When Lexi May was researching options for giving birth to her first child five years ago, her holistic outlook guided her.

“I wanted (my birthing experience) to be beautiful, natural. I wanted to have a say in my labor,” said May, 25. “I know who I am as a person, and I wanted my labor to be an empowering experience.”

May’s research pointed her to the Karmanos Center for Natural Birth at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak. More than 1,400 women have given birth at the center since it opened in 2014. May is one of them; she’s had two children there, one in 2015 and another last December.

May shared her birth story during a recent roundtable discussion at the center, where she joined panel moderator and birth center founder Danialle Karmanos, a journalist and community activist, and several medical experts in the birthing field. They gathered in the center’s lobby, which is decorated in Moroccan-inspired colors and patterns and a cozy fireplace. The group talked about the center and its impact on building awareness and education programs related to natural birth.

‘Home’ birth, hospital setting

The Karmanos Center for Natural Birth, with six private birth suites, provides a supportive, home-like environment for expectant mothers who are looking for a safe, natural childbirth experience. In general, “natural” birth refers to different ways of giving birth without pain medication. Staffed with nurses, midwives, obstetricians and neo-natal specialists trained in holistic birth approaches, the Karmanos Center offers mothers-to-be everything from expert medical care to hydrotherapy, aromatherapy, massages and walking paths — both indoors and in a courtyard outside.

A woman may be a candidate for natural birth at the Karmanos Center if her pregnancy is considered low-risk, if she delivers between 37 and 42 weeks, if she completes natural childbirth preparation and if she agrees to be transferred to a traditional labor and delivery room if needed.

After May made her decision to give birth naturally, friends and family asked her if she thought it was a safe way to give birth. She did. “That’s why I love the location of the center,” May said. “If anything was to happen, the operating room is just down the

Roundtable participants



Dr. Ray Bahado-Singh
Physician, Obstetrics and
Gynecology
Beaumont Medical Group



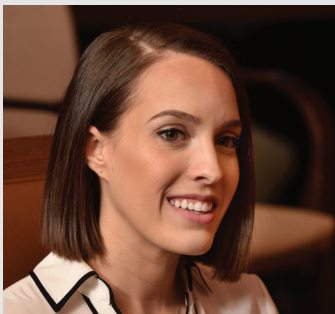
Dr. Sam Bauer
Physician Executive for
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Beaumont Medical Group



Dr. Paula Fishbaugh
Physician
Beaumont Medical Group
Danialle Karmanos,
Philanthropist



Sara Lebovic
Certified Nurse Midwife
Beaumont



Lexi May
Mom of 2 and natural
birth advocate



Melissa Paul
Nurse, Labor and Delivery
Beaumont



Anne Stewart
Chief Nursing Officer
Beaumont, Royal Oak

Photos by Rodney Curtis for Crain’s Content Studio



hall. That made my family feel more at ease."

Parents feeling confident and secure is one of the center's top priorities.

"I was drawn to this from the scientific side," said Dr. Ray Bahado-Singh, a physician who specializes in maternal and fetal medicine in obstetrics/gynecology at Beaumont. "If you look at the turn of the century, in the 1900s, the maternal mortality rate was exceedingly high. And, in fact, deliveries, as a matter of course, occurred at home."

As the 1900s progressed, giving birth in a hospital setting became standard – so much so that it was considered "industrialized" and "institutionalized," until a renewed interest in natural births began in the late 1980s.

Bahado-Singh and the Beaumont team considered the Karmanoses' vision appealing. It's an ideal circumstance, he said, when an expectant mom and her partner get to have a home birth in a hospital setting. "I must commend Beaumont leadership in embracing the vision," he said.

Patients at the Karmanos center will stay in their private suites from the time they arrive to give birth until they go home with

their baby; most moms who have a natural delivery are able to leave the hospital within 24 hours of delivery. The rooms are designed for baby-parent bonding, with a separate baby bathing area.

Education and shared decision-making

Key to that overall vision for the center was an education component – for patients and for the staff.

Dr. Sam Bauer, an obstetrician and gynecologist and high-risk pregnancy expert, serves as physician executive for obstetrics and gynecology for the Beaumont Medical Group, a 1,000-physician multispecialty group employed by Beaumont Health.

Bauer said ultimate success in the birth arena comes from patient and staff education. "We've done (and still are doing) a lot of work with nursing and physician education," he said. "This center has really changed the mindset of how we educate our nurses and doctors. We talk about complicated things, but we also talk about how we're taking care of (expectant parents)."



Classes at the center start with breathing and natural pain-management techniques and extend to additional comfort options like music therapy and reflexology. Melissa Paul, a nurse at the center, started her career in maternity several years ago and now, since the center opened, she said she is even more in tune with current natural-delivery practices. “The education — and becoming certified — was just wonderful. The holistic classes were amazing,” Paul said. “We went through extensive testing.”

Central to the development of the center was the role the certified nurse midwife would play; about one in seven deliveries at the hospital are performed by certified nurse midwives. About one in seven deliveries at the hospital are performed by certified nurse

midwives.

Sara Lebovic is a certified nurse midwife who has provided care for women at the Karmanos Center for Natural Birth since its inception.

“Midwifery really aligns with the patient- and family-centered idea behind this birth center,” Lebovic said. “It’s about shared decision-making, and it’s about empowering women to make an informed decision and really know what their options are and make them feel, especially in this place, at home.”

“Midwives are birth workers who are trained to take care of low risk women and keep you safe, and, of course, include medical intervention when it’s necessary, but also remind you that you’re a



“Answering to the patient’s call, really, ultimately, is our mission.”

– Dr. Paula Fishbaugh, Physician, Beaumont Medical Group

human being, and this is one of the most amazing, transformative experiences you’re going to go through.

“So here, we try to make them feel at home. That’s why a lot of people come here. They want to feel at home. They want to be able to move around and change position and really listen to their body.”

‘It truly is their choice’

Dr. Paula Fishbaugh, an obstetrician-gynecologist, was also involved with the planning and launch of the center. She has delivered numerous babies there.

When she first became a physician, Fishbaugh said, there was little support for safe, natural deliveries.

“When I started here, we had guys who would talk about the old days of, ‘Oh, you just used to give everyone a spinal, put on the

forceps and pull out the baby,’” she said. “Honestly, as a resident, it was ingrained in us that the natural stuff was just not good.”

That was then. Today, the Karmanos center is poised to be a catalyst for other natural birth centers and an opportunity to train staff, engage physicians and create a dialogue to develop the ideal patient- and family-centered care experience.

For Anne Stewart, chief nursing officer at Beaumont, Royal Oak, the bottom line is remembering that she and her team are “just guests” in their patients’ and families’ lives.

“It’s the right thing for our patients to allow them to choose the way they want to give birth,” she said. “It truly is their choice. We need to listen to them and allow them to tell us the way we should go.”

For more about the Karmanos Center for Natural Birth, visit Beaumont.org/kcnb.



SAFE CARE. AVAILABLE HERE.

Beaumont is still the same health system with the innovative, compassionate care you have always relied upon. And now, we have enacted additional safety measures so you can feel confident coming to us for care, including:

- Patients, visitors and employees are screened for COVID-19 symptoms at the door and given a face mask.
- Appointments are staggered and chairs are spaced to allow for social distancing.
- COVID-19 patients are treated in separate areas.

For whatever your medical need, Beaumont is safe and ready to help.

beaumont.org/safe



Beaumont

Safe care. Available here.