



JOHN MANIACI – State Journal

Zach Svendson weighs in at 10 pounds, 14 ounces, on Ingrid Andersson's sling scale as Zach's mom, Rachel, looks on in their Sun Prairie home late last month. Andersson, a certified nurse midwife, has been the midwife for the Svendsons' three children.

# What I do: Midwife

I had already gotten my undergraduate degree at UW-Madison in anthropology. Later, as a master's student, I began exploring women's birth stories — that was in the late '80s. As I listened to women, I heard a lot of sadness, loss and confusion — including from my own mother. Even when a mother and baby came through healthy, they didn't necessarily come through untraumatized. But there were a few women who spoke of their births as life-empowering. So, I set out to investigate why this life process could be so different for different women. I switched career gears and transferred to the UW-Madison Nursing School and then to the Frontier School of Midwifery and Family Nursing in Kentucky. That's where I worked to become a midwife.

Now I'm a licensed nurse midwife in

**Name:** Ingrid Andersson

**Age:** 42

**Job:** Certified nurse midwife with Community Nurse Midwives.

Madison who comes to women's homes for labor and birth. By the time of labor, the family and I have come to know each other well because we have met for hour-long visits in their home or mine throughout pregnancy. My assistants and I stay with every woman through labor and birth and at least two hours postpartum. I return for one-day and three-day visits. We talk on the phone and see each other as often as necessary for four to six weeks following birth. If I detect anything abnormal at any point, we access appropriate medical resources. Like a lifeguard, I jump in if the mother or

baby needs help. But almost always, everything goes well: The family stays at the center of its own process, and I encourage the mother and partner, if interested, to catch their baby themselves.

My most recent, moving experience happened with a labor and delivery nurse who was having her third baby with me at home. Rachel told me in late pregnancy she would like to try to catch her baby herself this time. When labor started, she did her own internal exams and went for a walk in the mall with her husband and children to get things moving. A couple of hours later, back home in her own bedroom, Rachel caught her baby boy herself with the help of her own mother's hands. What intergenerational bonding — and what a sense of competence and power for that family.

— Interviewed by Amanda Kramer

*What I Do lets people tell in their own words what they do to make a living. Contact [Kramer.News@gmail.com](mailto:Kramer.News@gmail.com) to suggest someone to feature.*