



A midwives' advocacy group will sponsor a benefit performance of "Birth," a monologue-style play about women's childbirth stories, at the Avo Playhouse on Sept. 8.

Karen Brody's "Birth" is a confessional-style comedy/drama that tells the funny, poignant and sad birth stories of eight women. The play, inspired by Eve Ensler's similarly styled "The Vagina Monologues," will serve as a fundraiser for the California Association of Midwives.

"Birth" was born last year at San Jose's City Lights Theatre Company, and since then has been produced elsewhere to raise more than \$10,000 for regional maternity care groups. This year, more than 100 benefit performances of "Birth" will be staged in 30 cities around the United States, with a goal of raising \$30,000 in 2007.

The play tells the stories of eight women from all walks of life and with very different childbirth experiences, from a home birth, to a Caesarean section, to a medical-assisted epidural delivery.

The Vista performance is being produced by two local midwives, Andrea S. Meyer of Encinitas and Michelle Freund of Oceanside. Both women have been working as home-birth midwives for a decade or more. The show is being directed by midwife Gabrielle Lucido, who portrays one of the women in the play. The other seven roles are played by local women who have either had home births or are student or professional midwives or are doulas.

"Birth" author Brody is a playwright, mother and founder of BOLD, the Birth On Labor Day global movement to make maternity care more mother-friendly. Co-producer Meyer said that she and Freund are more interested in raising awareness about birth options with this weekend's performance than in making money. "We hope to cover our expenses, but more than anything we want the public to become more aware. We want the performance on Saturday to serve as a sharing and healing place."

"Birth" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 8 at the Avo Playhouse, 303 Main St. in Vista. Tickets are \$25 for general admission and \$22 for seniors and students. For tickets, call (760) 721-2110.

Pam Kragen is the entertainment editor of the North County Times.