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Auction delivers for birth center

By P.H. Wiest
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The Gentle Birth Foundation hopes that by Sunday night it will be able to deliver a lot of money to the Friends of the Gentle Birth Center.

The foundation, led by actress Karen Black and Richard C. Wallace, founder of the International Artists' Guild, is sponsoring "Invest in the Best Celebrity Art Auction and Show" to benefit the Glendale birthing center, which has been under investigation by the state medical board since January.

Local authorities have charged that non-certified midwives were delivering babies there and that other medical emergencies were improperly handled.

"Right now, I can't tell you the status of the investigation. We've heard nothing since January," said Tonya Brooks, founder and director of the center.

"I really think things like this are politically driven," she added.

The Friends of the Gentle Birth Center, beneficiaries of the

auction, was started three years ago by parents who supported the center. The non-profit group raises money to help pay for equipment and supplies for the center.

"The center serves a wide variety of clients," Brooks said. "We have a fair number of parents who are affluent and educated . . . we even have some second-generation home-birthers . . . and two medical students."

Black, who has appeared in many films, is a parent whose daughter was delivered at the center and recommends it "only if you want a private, one-on-one birth experience and close communication with a woman whose expertise is worth depending on."

Midwives have delivered 3,000 babies at the center since it opened in 1984, Brooks said.

The center only handles clinically low-risk pregnancies — "one baby, head down, two weeks on either side of birth date," Brooks said.

"Unlike most hospital care," Brooks said, "midwives attend to

the birth from the onset of labor through delivery, regardless of shifts. A midwife's time is not as



Tonya Brooks
Gentle Birth Center

taxed as a doctor's. They can sit there and hold your hand.

And to the charges of inade-

quacies, she said, "We don't abandon medical protocol, it's just if the background."

The center serves as an office for Dr. William Hayling, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology through the UCLA and Charles Drew Medical schools.

Brooks said that since the announcement of the auction, "people have been coming out of the woodwork."

"We are getting a lot of support from artists, I think because, more than other people, they understand the emotional aspects of things," she said.

London-based operatic soprano Susan Todhunter, Grammy Award-winning singer and composer David Pomerantz and jazz musician Glen Zatoła will be featured.

More than 30 visual artists are contributing original paintings and sculptures and will be present for a reception after the auction.

The event will be at the Universal Sheraton Hotel on Sunday.