

# Sweet Relief

UNH alum provides education, resources -  
and a place to rest - for new parents

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At the age of 11, Krista Maltais began babysitting and envisioned that one day she would open her own daycare. While that turned out to not be an ideal fit, she knew she would have a career working with children and parents.

During her senior year in UNH's [human development and family studies](#) (HDFS) program, the New Hampshire native was completing her thesis project on adolescent maternal-fetal attachment and came across an organization called DONA International which had recently developed a program for

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postpartum doula certification. Maltais knew instantly it was the field for her. She took the doula certification training upon graduating from UNH in 2006 and entered private practice. Becoming a doula, she says, has allowed her to utilize her UNH degree to educate parents and support families during a critical time in life. In the years since her initial

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training, she has become one of only three Advanced Postpartum Doulas and one of 16 Postpartum Doula Trainers within the international organization. She is also an Advanced Lactation Consultant.

"The human development and family studies program was very appealing because I could specialize in development and family dynamics without having to commit to a very narrow career pathway," says Maltais. "The information and

education I obtained provided opportunities to explore different and viable career options."

In 2013 Maltais gave birth to her first son. Despite having an education, years of experience working with families, a supportive partner (also a UNH alum) and access to resources, she still struggled physically, mentally and emotionally in her early parenting.

"I was deeply frustrated by the lack of support our society has for families and determined to make change," she says. "Three years later, I had a second son and when he turned a year old, I had the idea to combine my UNH education, my doula career experience and my desires as a parent into one comprehensive model of parenting support."

In October of 2018 [Relief Parenting Respite and Resource Center](#) opened its doors in Hampton, N.H. and has been growing since. The first and only parenting center of its kind, its mission is to help parents obtain the skills, support and confidence they need to care for themselves so they can care for their children and loved ones. Services include educational classes, support groups, private consultations, on-premise childcare, body work options, and work room and respite (aka nap) sessions.

The decision to turn her private doula practice into a brick and mortar community business structure was a big one, and Maltais turned to the [NH Small Business Development Center](#) at UNH's Paul College of Business and Economics for guidance and mentorship.

“Through this wonderful program and resources they provide, my small business has been able to launch, survive COVID, and exponentially grow over the last 4 years,” she says.

For Maltais, the relationship with UNH has come full circle. Maintaining a connection with the university – especially students – is very important to her.

To  
that



*Staff and UNH interns at Relief Parenting in Hampton, N.H.*

end, Relief Parenting offers HDFFS students internship opportunities that help them gain a critical understanding of human development, family dynamics, resource building, effective communication skills and community support, and gives them valuable hands-on experience with the daily workings of running a business.

“I am glad to offer current students a space to explore alternative career pathways and professional networking opportunities in preparation for graduation and entrance into the workforce,” Maltais says. “Over the years, I have also been a guest speaker for HDFFS and nursing classes regarding the importance of parenting care, lactation support, birth and postpartum doula work, and career opportunities available with a human development and family studies degree. Several of my staff members are also graduates of UNH which also helps strengthen our UNH ties!”



Relief

*The childbirth education room at Relief Parenting*

Parenting recently partnered with UNH’s [nursing](#) program to help support ongoing research for the Maternal Postpartum Support Services (MaPSS) Study. Parents who attend the Center are invited to participate in research surveys that will provide feedback about the experiences of pregnant women who have a history of

trauma and how it impacts their pregnancy, pre- and post-natal care and support, and their perceptions of parenting young infants. The results of this study will help shape community support systems, policies and protocols, in New Hampshire and beyond.

“The education I gained through the HDFFS program at UNH has been invaluable to my career as a postpartum doula, lactation consultant, parent educator, and community support provider,” says Maltais. “I have deeply valued receiving such a high level of education through my home state university system. I use my degree daily and am proud to give back to my alma mater and New Hampshire families through my work.”

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