

Family Recipe

By Flavia Franceschini

I know someone who constantly refers to her third child as “the big oops”. She means no harm and those who know her agree that she adores her children and is a very proud mama. Yet, each time she jokes about getting pregnant “by accident” I cringe. For those of us who were forced to go through unusual, costly, creative and many times difficult routes in order to become parents, the thought that a baby can be so casually conceived and its process taken for granted is certainly a moment for pause and, I admit, a bit of outrage.

For members of the LGBTQ community, creating a family often takes a bit of imagination and a lot of perseverance. As more couples try to find the best alternative for their situation, many are opting to seek the help of infertility clinics to answer their initial questions, help them get the legal and medical help they need and set them on the road to parenthood.

For Joe and Kevin in Tennessee, who have been together for 13 years, the process of starting a family goes back to 2004 when they went from talking about a baby to actually looking into what it would take to make it happen.

Like most couples, they started by looking for others who had gone through it and searching the internet. Joe describes those first attempts at getting

information about surrogacy as “daunting and overwhelming”. Through a friend they were able to find an egg donor they trusted but what to do next? For them, finding the right infertility consultant, who was not only knowledgeable but also willing to work with a gay couple, was the key to reducing stress and heading in the right direction. They worked directly with Mindy Berkson, founder of Lotus Blossom, an infertility consulting firm located in Chicago.

Theirs has been a long road and one that included: egg harvesting, sperm donations, screening of both by qualified laboratory, search for surrogate, psychological and medical evaluation of all parts involved, fertilization of eggs, period of incubation, transfer of viable embryos *continued on page 14*



Family Recipe continued from page 11

into surrogate, and several months of finger crossing. Because Kevin’s job requires them to move every few years, they had the additional task of transferring the embryos from Vegas to Tennessee and consulting with an attorney about the appropriate way of getting through the entire process without breaking any laws.

If you are wondering just how expensive these steps can become, Joe advises you to consider things like third party insurance (in case surrogate doesn’t have her own), and all the fees your insurance may not cover. He concludes, “This is not something you should go into unprepared. The final costs can be somewhere between eighty and a hundred thousands dollars. I like to share the numbers simply because it was something we really wanted to know at the beginning and had a hard time figuring out.” He adds, “of course it is worth every penny but you have to be ready for the expenses.” Joe and Kevin are still in the process of transferring embryos

and are hopeful to have a baby by the end of the year. With a 52% chance of having twins, they may be more than a little busy by next Christmas.

Mary and Julie, from Los Angeles, know first hand just how much effort can go into starting a family or, as it is in their case, adding to it. They have been together for 11 years and have a daughter, 7 year old Sarah. Baby Catherine joined the clan on 1.23.12 thus claiming one of the coolest birth dates of the year! Although Mary gave birth to their first daughter, going through a surrogate this time around made more sense for them. They started their research looking for reliable sources of information and although they agree that the beginning of their journey was rather overwhelming they also found the answers to their questions at Lotus Blossom. Finding an egg donor, a surrogate, and sperm donor can be more than a little difficult. Mary says that “it takes a couple of angels to help you during the process, Mindy was one of them in our case. The first thing she did was to lift a weight off our shoulders.” And once that weight had been lifted Mary and Julie ran with the possibilities. They were very happy with their surrogate and with the amount of involvement they had throughout the pregnancy. They were both present at the birth and older sister Sarah joined them soon after. As for how Sarah is enjoying their new addition, she has recently declared that she’ll never go to school again!

These are the stories that make me want to

stand in my son’s room, amongst all the things teenage boys like to collect, and breath in the magic of being his mom. No matter how tall he gets he will always be the baby I conceived against all odds. Like Sarah and Catherine, like Joe and Kevin’s baby and many others who came into the world through their parents sheer love and determination, my son is not an oops, an accident, he is a dream come true. Good luck to all the parents who are dreaming today. ▼