

Profile

by Dana Caprina

“As difficult as third-party reproduction can be for heterosexual couples – gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender couples, as well as single parents, can face even greater challenges.”

*– Infertility Consultant,
Mindy Berkson,
founder of
Lotus Blossom
Consulting*

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Mindy:

It has been such a pleasure working with you these past several months. We don't know how we would have succeeded if we did not have you in place. You helped us to think of things that we would have never considered when choosing our surrogate and egg donor. You identified two agencies that were flexible and accommodating to our needs, and you referred us to a wonderful team of doctors. If it were not for the team of professionals that you put together for us, we know that we would not be expecting our family today. Thank you for your attentiveness, knowledge and wisdom that you shared throughout the process and still share with us today throughout the pregnancy. We are so grateful to you and excited about our new family!

*Sincerely, Marc and Jeff,
Arlington, VA*

GAY CHICAGO: Why Lotus Blossom Consulting?

MINDY BERKSON: Dealing with the diagnosis of infertility, or facing the prospect of third-party reproduction, can be a confusing and overwhelming experience. I know; I've been there. I founded Lotus Blossom Consulting after I was diagnosed with unexplained

secondary infertility. As I sat weeding through the mountain of materials provided to me by my clinician, I was overwhelmed, and wondered where to turn. Here I was: a smart, resourceful woman, but where should I start? Was I going to Google “egg donors” to help



my family grow? I knew there had to be a better way.

From my personal experience, and from the insight I gained through my professional experiences at physician's offices, egg donor and surrogacy agencies, Lotus Blossom was born – to provide an insider's perspective to the infertility and third-party reproduction process. LBC provides the most comprehensive resources from around the country to help facilitate the best answers in dealing with the physical, financial and emotional needs of each individual client.

It is my firm belief that the answers you get are only as good as the questions you ask – this is an essential element in all my consults. Lotus Blossom provides a personal advocate to address the ever-changing issues and conflicts that often arise in an

infertility cycle, so clients know that they are making effective and informed decisions, rather than simply making an emotional decision that comes from operating in a vacuum.

When the old-fashioned way of getting pregnant is no longer an option, how can you and your consultants help individuals save money time and effort throughout the cycle?

Proper planning at the very beginning of your journey can save time, energy, and money towards a more effective and streamlined treatment cycle. Lotus Blossom Consulting will help establish the foundation financially, physically and emotionally to address the ultimate or final family building goal, and not just one cycle.

In addition to providing financial guidance through our on-staff financial planner, Lotus Blossom has developed an e-book, entitled *Financing Your Infertility Treatment*, to help address financial options. The e-book

is available for free on our Web site at www.lotusblossomconsulting.com.

And, because an infertility consultant can help to identify resources (such as egg donors, surrogates, and agencies), which can increase the total pool of available donors and surrogates, donor matches meet closely with desired criteria, and the wait time is decreased between diagnosis and treatment, and a family.

Simply doing the research for this interview sent me in a tailspin. There is so much information on the Web. How does one discern a good clinic

Lotus Blossom Consulting's Mindy Berkson

from a mediocre clinic, an ideal egg donor or surrogate candidate and where for a same sex couple to even begin?

As difficult as third-party reproduction can be for heterosexual couples – gay, lesbian, bi-, and transgender couples, as well as single parents, can face even greater challenges. Identifying resources appropriate to each individual's situation is paramount.

Lotus Blossom Consulting puts together a qualified team of multi-disciplinary professionals (fertility centers, reproductive endocrinologists, mental health professionals, and attorneys), who can effectively address the issues uniquely associated with individual needs, as well as situations associated with discriminatory laws and regulations that can adversely affect same-sex couples.

For example, in the case of surrogacy with same-sex couples, it is essential to identify a surrogate who resides, and will give birth in, a "gay-friendly surrogate state," plus surrogates must also be willing to work with sex couples. And that's only the beginning. Since laws vary from state to state, it is extremely important to be represented by an attorney familiar with state law, who also has expertise in this genre of law. Lotus can provide those resources immediately.

Since laws vary from state to state, how does Illinois rank among the 50 states?

Illinois is an excellent state for

gestational surrogacy, because the biological and or intended parents are deemed the parents, and named on the birth certificate at birth. It is important to clarify here the difference between a gestational surrogate and a traditional surrogate. A gestational surrogate is carrying a non-biological embryo, whereas a traditional surrogate is 100 percent the biological mother of the baby. This slight distinction makes a tremendous difference in the eyes of the law. So it is essential to work closely with a legal professional who is familiar with all the parameters of family building with a thorough understanding of the various options for each situation, and the laws of the state where the birth will occur.

How does Lotus Blossom Consulting effectively help in identifying an egg donor and or a surrogate?

Lotus Blossom Consulting works closely with qualified agencies across the country to increase the pool of available candidates for our clients. We can match individual criteria in a short timeframe – typically two weeks.

We do not accept referral fees from any agency nor do we work exclusively with any one agency, so our pool is greater. Plus, no agency fees are paid until a candidate has been identified.

Tell me how couples that don't even have a first child can effectively plan for a second and third sibling?

When couples and individuals require collaborative reproduction, the

use of a third party such as an egg donor or a surrogate, the costs of the cycle escalate exponentially. It is important to establish proper financial planning before treatment begins in order to help set financial and time frame parameters for treatment. This is often an indicator to know when to change the course of treatment.

Lotus Blossom Consulting provides each couple with a Risk-Benefit analysis to help determine chances of success for a given treatment option. Setting financial and emotional parameters can help to prudently guide treatment courses and identify when it might be time to reassess your plan, and choose a different doctor-approved option.

With the incredible advancement of technology today, embryos created in one cycle can be frozen for use at a later date. This opportunity is the single most effective way to balance hope with caution, not only for a failed cycle, but also for a chance to meet the ultimate family building goal at a future time.

Where is the best place to find more information on Lotus Blossom Consulting?

Please visit our Web site at www.lotusblossomconsulting.com or contact me directly at 847-881-2685 for a free consultation. Through June 1, we will offer *Gay Chicago* readers a discounted rate for fees and services when they mention this column.

All questions for Dana can be sent to Danacaprina@aol.com.