

"Gift of Hope" for Infertile Couples

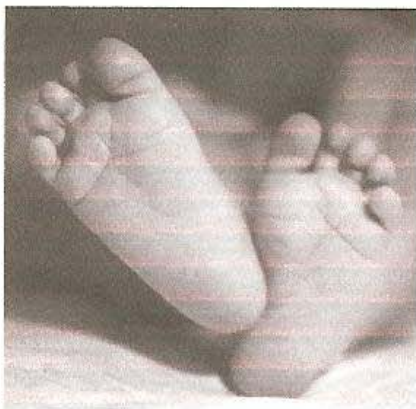
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One in eight couples struggle with infertility and turning to the science of in vitro fertilization can be far too expensive for financially-strapped couples. But, one local program has been established to fulfill the dreams of couples wanting nothing more than to finally become parents.



After five years of trying to become pregnant and two miscarriages, Laura and Terry Hughes of Lafayette were ready to throw in the towel. "You don't even know what to feel," says Laura, "because every time you take a pregnancy test and it's not positive - you go through all of those emotions."

While Laura was a great candidate for in vitro fertilization, the Hughes knew that the \$10,000 price tag for the procedure was not a financial option. "When we had decided that everything was over with," says Laura, "we were just going to be married...the Gift of Hope was shown on the news and at 10:00 that night, the phone started ringing, my mom called and a friend of ours called and everybody was like, 'you have to do it!'"

The Hughes had never heard of the Gift of Hope, a unique concept from Amelie Storment and her husband, Dr. John Storment, a reproductive endocrinologist with the Fertility and Women's Health Center in Lafayette. "The Gift of Hope is a program that we started a couple of years ago," says Dr. Storment, "simply stated - just to help couples who can't afford an IVF cycle to be able to afford it."

To qualify for the Gift of Hope program, couples must:

- *Submit an application stating their infertility diagnosis
- *Show their residency in Louisiana
- *Have a joint income under \$80,000/year

The Hughes are the first couple selected to bring a baby into the world. Their daughter, Hope, turns one this month. "Everybody laughs at us because we still look at her," says Laura, "and there's just nothing to say about her that is good enough, because she's just really...it's just amazing."

Proud father, Terry, says, "Whenever Laura had Hope, it was just the best day of my life. Our life before was great, but now, it's just being in Heaven, honestly!"

While in vitro fertilization only carries about a 50 percent success rate, when the final product is a healthy baby like Hope, Dr. Storment says he understands the power of his work. "It's the best job that I can imagine having and it's very rewarding to be able to help these couples begin their families."