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Hutto Woman Gives Other Couples Greatest Gift

By Christine Bolaños

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Nicole Benham with parents-to-be Sheila and Kevin McWilliams. They are expecting twins that Benham is carrying for them.

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Sheila and Kevin McWilliams of New Jersey were overjoyed when their little boy was born. That joy came with its share of worry when he was diagnosed with heart complications at 10 weeks old. One month short of his fourth birthday he passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest.

"We were left shattered. I was like 'I don't feel like we're done being parents.' We felt like he was stolen from us," Sheila said.

Though heartbroken the McWilliams felt they needed to be parents again. They didn't want to adopt for fear the birth mother would want to be a mother to the child after giving birth and then they would lose a child all over again. So they decided to look into surrogacy.

Their surrogacy agency matched them with Nicole Benham of Hutto and now they can't wait to meet their

"It was just amazing. About a year and a half after our son passed away we figured it was also a way to have part of our son. It's really a great way for people to become pregnant again. It's really exciting," she said.

Benham was adopted as a baby and always thought about the concept of adoption growing up.

"I was saved from a bad situation. After having my own two kids I realized I loved being pregnant. I love having two kids of my own. For years we kind of talked about it on and off and I think it maybe three years ago I went to a sermon at church and I could tell it was something I was being led to do. I came home and I googled surrogacy. I think I sent applications to three different places," Benham said.

She is now in her second surrogacy pregnancy through the agency, The Surrogacy Experience, whose headquarters are in New Jersey.

"The Surrogacy Experience is extremely honored to be working with Nicole on her second journey. As a second time carrier myself I too delivered a singleton for my first intended parents and then delivered twins in 2012 for my second journey. I know the excitement and nervousness Nicole is going through and look forward to supporting her and her intended parents every step of the way," TSE Director Client Relations Tina Dettlaff said.

No matter what time day or night, Dettlaff is ready to answer Benham's questions and address her concerns.

"The way it works is that you write your own profile. Both sides write their own profiles. Then Tina reviews everybody's profile and figures out who is a good match for whom," Benham explained.

She said she never had trouble avoiding a motherly bond with the child because she psychologically prepared herself to understand the baby wasn't hers. She is only the carrier of the baby, or human "incubator," as she refers to herself.

That being said she still keeps in touch with the parents of the child from her first surrogacy pregnancy. The little girl just turned 1.

"It was amazing to see how happy they were to see their baby. They couldn't have done that themselves. You're helping them have such a precious gift that would've otherwise been impossible," Benham added.

The McWilliams and Benham advise those interested in surrogacy do a fair amount of research so they can find the agency that best fits their needs.

"I think women are afraid of feeling left out because they're not the one who's pregnant and it's not who has the belly, it's about being a parent in the end. It might be overwhelming but to have Tina bring Nicole and John (Benham's husband) into our lives, it's the best thing ever. I really hope that people are not afraid to do it. It's been such a great experience for us," McWilliams said.

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