



## The Journey to Becoming a Family: Tina's Story

November 26, 2013



The happy parents, the twins, and Tina with her husband.

for others? Where do families looking for carriers even begin to look? Is this something outside the norm? How often do people actually use surrogates?

Ok, so I'll admit, I'm a total reality TV junkie. Now, while I know this is not my most attractive quality, I will also admit that I was particularly fond of the reality show [Giuliana and Bill](#) starring Giuliana and Bill Rancic. Maybe it was because I began to watch soon after giving birth to my son, feeling incredibly blessed to have a perfect, healthy baby in my arms and watching with sympathy as Giuliana longs for getting pregnant only to find out that it is simply not going to happen for her. And then, the family gets their wish through gestational surrogacy. I was very intrigued by this process. Who are these women carrying babies

Well, as I've learned, it happens everyday. I was introduced to the world of gestational surrogacy through an agency called [The Surrogacy Experience](#) that matches parents to women who will carry their child for them. I also had the pleasure of speaking with two women, Tina Dettlaff and Julie Francis, who are both involved in the process of gestational surrogacy. Tina is the Director of Client Relations and previous gestational carrier, and Julie Francis is a gestational carrier who is currently pregnant and living in Connecticut.

Tina Dettlaff, who has been with the agency since 2010, shared her story of being a gestational carrier with me. I asked Tina how she came to be involved in this area. She explained that she and her husband decided early on in their marriage that they only wanted one child. Then, after watching her best friend struggle and struggle to conceive, she finally offered to carry her friend's child for her. While her friend was soon able to get pregnant on her own, Tina's desire to help others in this way did not go away. Her own son was almost a teenager, but she continued to research gestational surrogacy and was matched in 2008 with Blair Sullivan Cuje, the owner of The Surrogacy Experience. After the birth of Blair's baby, Tina wanted to be a carrier again. She was then matched with a couple in New Jersey and in April of 2012, gave birth to twin boys.

Now, working for the agency, Tina works on a daily basis screening candidates to be carriers with background checks and detailed applications. It's a highly secure process. She said that on average of the 10-15 women who inquiry about becoming a surrogate a day, 1 will be asked to actually apply to the agency.

When I asked Tina if there were any misconceptions out there that she'd like to dispel, she shared with me that people often say "who are these women who give away their babies"? The truth is that gestational carriers have no biological connection to the babies they carry. She also said that there is a misconception out there that the carriers are "desperate, low income women" who are in it for the money. The truth here is that many carriers are in it for the experience, not for compensation. On the other side, there is a misconception out there {partially perpetuated by people like Giuliana and Bill} that this process is only for the very wealthy but in truth, while a costly process, many parents put a lot on the line financially to create their family through surrogacy.

Tina also shared with me that carriers truly need a solid support system when deciding to become surrogates. The whole process truly affects your own family as well as the intended family. She calls the carrier's families the "unsung heroes" but the message these women are sharing with their families is all about giving back.

For more special stories from The Surrogacy Experience, visit <http://tseheart2heart.com>.

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