

FEATURED STORY

Vindy Basic

A long journey to motherhood

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With the help of frozen embryos, a Masury woman became a mom.

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MASURY — Like any new first-time mom, Patricia Wilson can't seem to stop touching and looking at her 7-month-old son, Nathan, whom she calls her "miracle baby."

She picks him up. He smiles and says "mama" over and over, obviously very pleased with his first word — a word he just began saying just last week.

She kisses Nathan's face, softly caresses his arm, pats him on the rear, gives him a hug. Lying on his stomach in their Addison Road home, he raises his head and smiles some more.

"He's a very happy, healthy, strong baby," she said with both pride and, for good reason, relief.

Circumstances surrounding Wilson's drive to become a mother were often difficult and heartbreaking for her.

Both mother and Nathan nearly died during an emergency Caesarean section at St. Elizabeth Health Center on Jan. 14, made particularly dangerous because of her severe pre-eclampsia, Wilson said.

Pre-eclampsia is a disorder of pregnancy characterized by high blood pressure and edema, which is swelling from excessive accumulation of fluid in tissue.

She spent four days in the hospital — and Nathan spent 10 days — before they were released to go home.

Difficult road

The birth was the end of a long, arduous journey for the 40-year-old woman, who endured discouragement and heartache to fulfill the dream she had kept alive since she was 3 years old, to have a baby and to be a mother.

The reality of pregnancy and birth was the result of something that seems and sounds almost other worldly: a frozen embryo transfer.

Four embryos, frozen since they were donated by a couple 14 years ago, were implanted in Wilson's uterus June 13 — Friday the 13th — of 2003 by Dr. Lawrence Werlin at the Coastal Fertility Medical Center in Irvine, Calif.

After consultation with Dr. Werlin and testing to make sure Wilson was a viable candidate for the process, the implant was performed as outpatient surgery, taking less than two hours for implant and recovery.

Wilson stayed in California for 10 days, the first on bed rest to protect the pregnancy, and then returned to Ohio. Six weeks later, blood tests confirmed she was pregnant.

"It changed my life completely," Wilson said.

"She is very, very happy," Wilson's mother, Thomasina Wilson of Masury, said.

"It's made her a different person. She's always had a void in her life that Nathan has filled. We are very proud of her," her mother said.

Dealt with setbacks

One of Wilson's setbacks on the road to becoming a mother happened when she was 17 and was diagnosed with endometriosis, in which abnormal tissue grows outside of the uterus. That diagnosis caused a doctor to say it was unlikely she could ever conceive, and he recommended she have a hysterectomy.

At age 23, Wilson said she began thinking seriously about motherhood. But after years of trying naturally without success, and because of the endometriosis coupled with steroid injections taken during back surgery that killed all her eggs, she was told by numerous doctors she would never be a biological mother.

She then turned to adoption, but even that brought her heartbreak. Just four hours before she was to receive a child, Cuyahoga County authorities gave the baby to a married couple with a home and more money, or as Wilson refers to it, "to the highest bidder."

So was so devastated that she had to quit her job.

"People were always asking me what happened, and why, and I just couldn't take it," she said.

But shortly after that, she received a call from Dr. Werlin, whom she had learned about on the Internet, saying they had embryos waiting for her.

Donor couple

Wilson does not know the couple who donated the embryos, nor do they know who she is. However, she was told the mother had brown hair and eyes and was 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighed 124 pounds. The father was 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighed 150 pounds and had sandy brown hair and blue eyes.

The donors know Nathan was conceived and born, Wilson said.

She said Nathan, with light brown hair and blue eyes, is a good physical match for her family. She said he looks just like baby pictures of her brother, David of Hubbard, at the same age.

She was implanted with four embryos and was pregnant within six weeks with twins. But even then, the problems were not over. At seven weeks, she lost one of the twins, and faced losing Nathan three times. An allergic reaction to the progesterone she was taking for pre-eclampsia caused severe swelling in one of her legs, which put both hers and Nathan's lives at risk and necessitated the emergency C-section, she said.

Born premature at 33 weeks, Nathan weighed 3 pounds, 15 ounces and was 17³/₄ inches long. Today, he weighs 17 pounds, 8 ounces and is 25¹/₂ inches long, and his development is normal, his mother said.

Support system

Wilson, a single parent, said her parents, Art and Thomasina Wilson, along with her grandmother, Jeanne Wilson of Brookfield, her brother David, sister Pamela Wilson of Houston, Texas, and many other family members and friends, provide a good support system for Nathan. Wilson's parents take care of Nathan while she works as a schedule coordinator at MVI Home Care and Hospice in Liberty.

She said the entire frozen embryo transfer process cost about \$18,000. The embryo implant, which cost \$3,000, was not covered by her health insurance, and she also had to pay travel and lodging costs. However, the birth and many of the other medical costs were covered by insurance, she said.

Because of the success she had with the frozen embryo transfer process, Wilson wants to form an organization to help other women become mothers in this manner by putting them in touch with Dr. Werlin. She said interested women can call her at (330) 448-2720. She calls the organization Angel Bear, her nickname for Nathan.

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