

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE



LAKE ELSINORE: Surrogate baby now surrogate mom

[BY STEPHANIE SCHULTE](#)

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FRANK BELLINO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Kimberly Haugh 29, from Lake Elsinore was born from a surrogate mother, and is herself a surrogate mother to a one-year-old baby Ella for a gay couple in Norway. She has recently been matched up with another couple. in Lake Elsinore, October, 31, 2013.

Kimberly Haugh knows she was a “gift” to her parents – in the literal sense. It was a present she wanted to pay forward someday.

It was 29 years ago Haugh was born via a surrogate, then a relatively new – and highly controversial – practice. And it was just over a year ago that the Lake Elsinore resident and mother of three became a surrogate herself, giving birth to a child for a gay couple in Norway.

“Since I can remember I knew I wanted to give another family the gift my parents were given,” Haugh said.

Though it’s certainly rare, it’s unknown if Haugh is the first surrogate baby to become a surrogate mother. There is no central reporting agency to document surrogate births in the United States.

Most surrogate agencies keep birth records, however, and there is little question the practice has grown.

“Thirty years ago, our agency had about five surrogate births per year,” said Hilary Hanafin, Ph.D, the Chief Managing Psychologist for the Center for Surrogate Parenting Inc., the agency with which Haugh worked. “In the last few years we average over 80 births per year.”

As the number of people utilizing surrogate mothers has swelled over the years, laws and protocols have been put into place to protect both the surrogate mothers and future parents.

“As long as case law and legislation is followed and all parties are consenting, the intended parents are the legal parents at birth,” Hanafin said. “There are no post birth adoptions necessary.”

That’s a far cry from when Haugh’s parents went through the process in the 1970s and ’80s, when surrogacy arrangements were informal and lacked legal protection. Her parents paid all of the surrogate’s expenses and hoped for the best.

“When Kimberly came into our lives, surrogate mothers had a year to change their minds and take the baby back, making the wait agonizing,” said Carol Haugh, Kimberly’s mother.

In 2011, after having three kids of her own, Haugh decided the time was right. After going through a lengthy screening process with the Center for Surrogate Parenting Inc., Kimberly began her search for a couple, eventually finding the pair in Norway.

A fertility clinic used a donor egg during the in-vitro process, then implanted the embryo into Haugh.

“Knowing I was giving this gift to a loving couple was very exciting,” Haugh said. “I did not become attached to the life growing inside of me knowing the baby wasn’t mine to keep.”

When the healthy baby girl was born on Oct. 23, 2012, she was handed over to the new dad in the delivery room for “skin to skin” bonding.

Haugh’s husband has been supportive of the whole process.

“I would never want to hold Kimberly back from doing what she has dreamed of doing since she was a little girl,” Brett Carlson said. “Even to this day, I tell her that she is creating a miracle and doing something for people they could never have done.”

After healing from birthing the baby, Haugh and her family resumed their normal lives.

“We are open with our kids about how I came into this world and what I did for another couple,” Haugh said. “We want to make sure we live our lives as normally as possible.”

Compensation for a surrogate to carry a baby to term has increased in the three decades since Kimberly Haugh’s birth. Infertile couples who hire a surrogate pay a minimum of \$50,000, Hanafin said.

“Most women don’t get into surrogacy for the money,” added Hanafin. “It takes at least 18 months of hard work and there are risks involved.”

There are also the emotional hurdles. Currently Haugh is on her second surrogate journey and is working with an infertile couple from England. The first two attempts failed.

“I feel like I let both myself and the couple down,” she said. “I am hoping the third try is successful.”



Born to be a Surrogate Mother



Generous and compassionate are two adjectives commonly used to describe surrogate mothers. Surrogates are women who want to help other individuals create their family, something they easily are able to do. But thus far, there only has been one woman (that we know about) who can say she was born to be a surrogate mother.

Kimberly Dawn Haugh, a native Californian who is a wife and mother of three, is one of the only or perhaps the only known surrogate baby who then became a surrogate mother herself. 29 years ago, when surrogacy was in its infancy in the United States, Kimberly was born via a surrogate, a few years after the same woman carried her older sister.

Her parents needed the assistance of a surrogate because Kimberly's mother had been born without a uterus. Three decades ago, however, surrogacy was in its infancy and a lot riskier; the surrogate mother actually had a year to change her mind about keeping the baby. But luckily for Kimberly and her parents, their surrogate did not. At that time, it also was not uncommon for surrogacy arrangements to occur very informally without the benefit and protection of an attorney and/or surrogacy agency. Kimberly's parents paid all the surrogate's expenses and hoped for the best.



Learning About Surrogacy

Surrogacy has always been part of Kimberly's life. From a young age, Kimberly's parents told her about her, then, unusual birth story.

Explains Kimberly: "I cannot imagine my life to be any different. I don't remember ever not knowing about how I was born. My earliest memory of this was when I was about three and my mother sat me down on her lap to explain how I came into this world. I thought it was really cool then and I still do now."

Kimberly always felt it was her duty, after she had her own kids, to become a surrogate, even

offering to be one for her sister or her two cousins, if necessary. She had her heart set on wanting to give another family the amazing gift of a child they could not have any other way.

Expressing a sentiment that many would-be surrogates feel, Kimberly said: "Since I knew I was not going to have any more of my own children, why not help someone else out? Giving birth is the easy part. Surrogacy is a win-win for me because I get to experience pregnancy while helping another family have a child."

Kimberly's Matches



Kimberly's first match was with a male same sex couple from Norway for whom she delivered a beautiful baby girl. Having been together for 15 years, the men had long dreamed of the day they would become fathers.

When she was given their profile, Kimberly felt an immediate chemistry with both would-be daddies, especially since they all had a lot in common with each other. In particular, they impressed her with how they had envisioned the way they would explain their child's unique birth to him or her. Because of her own experience, this really resonated with Kimberly.

"I asked a bunch of ladies in my support group how I would know when I had met my "match." They told me to trust my intuition, which would lead me to the perfect couple and they were absolutely right," remembers Kimberly.

The fathers and Kimberly were in constant communications during her pregnancy and developed a close relationship. At 38 weeks, she delivered their baby girl, coincidentally on the same day that the Norwegian princess made international news when she helped gay friends get their baby out of India and back to Norway.

Family on Board with the Baby

The two families have stayed in touch since the men returned to Norway. Kimberly's entire family has been very supportive of her dream, especially her husband and parents, who were over the moon with her decision to become a surrogate. Her middle child also grew close to the new fathers while they were in California, understanding that the child Kimberly was carrying was theirs.

Kimberly is now on her second journey with an English couple that has been trying to have a baby for 25 years and has experienced many miscarriages, even with treatment and surrogacy. They are hoping that with Kim's great track record at getting pregnant that their frozen embryos will result in a much-wanted child.

Said Kimberly: "Again, through the matching process I intuitively felt that I should be the one to help this couple. It will mean the world to me if I can."

Kimberly Haugh, a child of surrogacy, is now fulfilling her dream of helping others create their own surrogate babies, just as her surrogate mother did 29 years ago. She is paying it forward in the circle of life.

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