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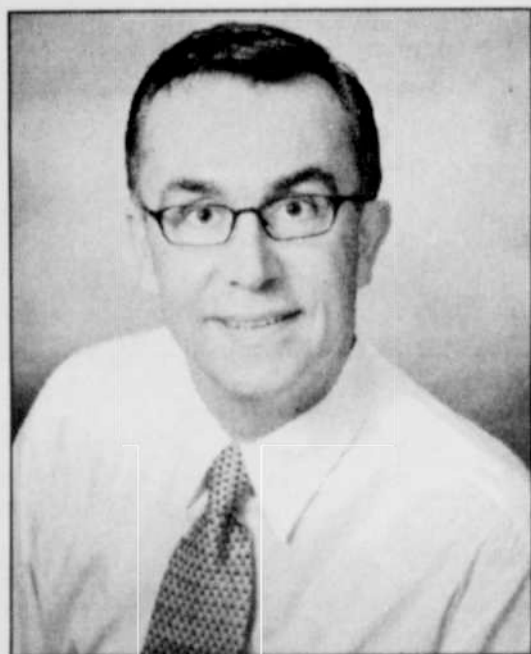
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We Are Family

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twins, a baby girl and a little boy with a history of child abuse. For various reasons, the couple were never chosen as adoptive parents for those kids.

"In the back of our minds we were wondering: 'Are they placating us? Are we really going to get a child?'" says Wagenhoffer.

The waiting game

After a year of waiting, the couple's social worker asked if they were willing to take the risk of looking in the foster care system.

"In the foster care system there is the assumption that reunification [with the birth mother] will be successful," explains Zahn. Though there were no guarantees that a child from the foster care system would have a permanent home with them, Zahn and Wagenhoffer decided to take the risk, and that was where they found their son Scott.

But when it came time for Zahn and Wagenhoffer to bring their 4-month-old son home, their social worker suggested that only one of them pick Scott up from his foster family.

"She was worried that if we went as a gay couple someone in his foster family would object and we may lose him," says Wagenhoffer.

Fearing they may jeopardize their chance at building a family, the couple obliged and brought Scott home without incident. Six weeks later they received a call from their social worker looking to place another child in their care—a 1-year-old boy named Alex.

"We knew we wanted more children eventually," says Wagenhoffer. "When we saw Alex, we instantly fell in love."

In 1997, Zahn and Wagenhoffer jointly adopted both of their sons. "It wasn't always easy," Wagenhoffer says. "We changed 6,000 diapers the first year."

Late-night feedings and thousands of diapers weren't the only obstacles the couple faced in raising their sons. "We've dealt with all of the stereotypes at one time or another," says Wagenhoffer. "A lot of folks think gay parents aren't deserving of healthy kids. We had someone say to us, 'There are so many couples waiting for healthy babies, how did you get two?' assuming that as gay parents, we should have last choice of children, especially healthy ones."

Parents who choose public adoption are often asked what's wrong with their children. "There is a misconception that parents who adopt through the state get 'damaged' children," says Hartman. But Wagenhoffer is quick to add: "There are risks with any adoptive path people choose. People need to decide what level of risk they're willing to accept."

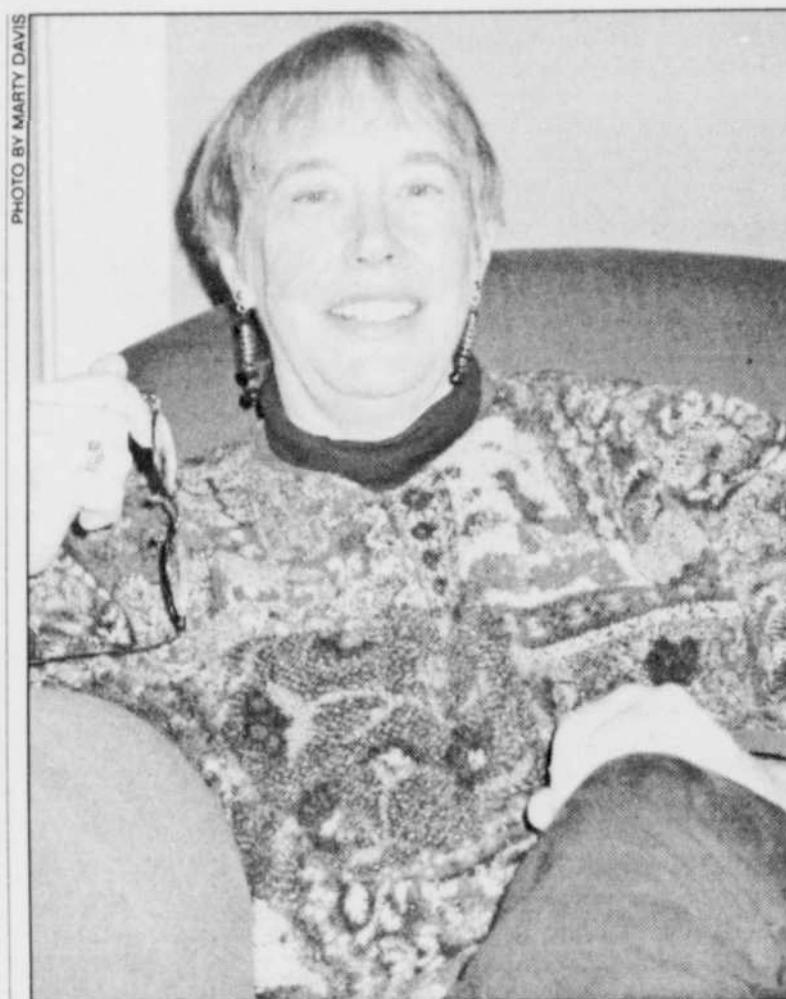
Surrogacy

From the beginning of their relationship 12 years ago, Will Halm and his partner, Marcellin Simard, both 52, knew they wanted to have children. After facing difficulty finding an adoption agency willing to work with a gay couple, they opted to pursue a different path.

"We decided we wanted a woman to have our baby," says Halm.

At the time, no agencies were matching intended parents with a surrogate—a woman who carries a child for another couple—so Halm says they had to put significant effort into finding someone. "We put the word out that we were looking for a woman to carry our child."

The couple, who live in Los Angeles, eventually found a surrogate, and after one failed embryo transfer and a miscarriage, they finally



Susan Rosenthal is a clinical social worker who helps same-sex families work through the process of creating a family, including legal and financial issues

learned they were going to have a child. Today they have three children—a daughter and two sons—through three different surrogates.

Halm's experience with surrogacy led him to help other gay couples in their struggle to have children by opening Growing Generations, a Los Angeles-based agency that works exclusively with the gay community to facilitate and support the surrogacy process. "It was born out of commitment and passion," says Halm. And in the past seven years, it has grown into the second-largest surrogacy agency in the world.

Nuts and bolts

"The needs of gay couples are so different from the needs of infertile heterosexual couples," says Growing Generations CEO Stuart Miller. "For infertile heterosexual couples, surrogacy is their last stop: They've tried infertility treatments for approximately 10 years and are extremely unhappy about going this route. But gay men are the opposite. This is their first stop, and they are thrilled to be going through this process."

But Miller cautions that the process can be overwhelming.

"There are approximately 250 activities that have to happen before a client goes home with a baby," Miller says, referring to the barrage of medical tests, legal procedures and psychological evaluations that are required for both surrogates and prospective parents.

Unlike private adoption, in which the

birth mother chooses the family, in surrogacy the decision is left up to the intended parents, explains Hodgson, founder of the Portland-based Northwest Surrogacy Center, noting that surrogacy is a much more popular option for gay men than women.

Once clients have chosen a surrogate, both parties enter into a contract. But the parent-surrogate relationship is about much more than paperwork. "We encourage intended parents to develop a relationship with their surrogate," says Hodgson. "There is a lot of trust involved. Intended parents trust the surrogate to eat well, avoid drugs and alcohol and to attend regular medical appointments."

With the average cost for surrogacy ranging from \$85,000 to \$100,000, Miller acknowledges that there are cheaper options for prospective parents.

"Private adoption is definitely cheaper, but there is no guarantee of success," he says, noting that gay couples may have trouble being selected as adoptive parents and that even if they are chosen, the birth mother may still change her

mind about placing her baby for adoption. With surrogacy, Miller adds, "The client is spending a lot of money, but there is a very predictable outcome—a baby."

While Hodgson agrees that the success rate for surrogacy is high, she cautions that the process is often lengthy. "By the time intended parents find a surrogate, do the screenings and medical testing, it can take a long time," she says.

The greatest gift

"I had wanted to be a surrogate for a very long time, but I was turned down by agencies because I had no other children," says Laura Edmark, 40, of



Portland adoption attorney Sandy Hodgson founded Northwest Surrogacy Center to give gay men and lesbians another family-building alternative