

# TWO MEN & TWO BABIES

*This couple creates a family via an egg donor and surrogacy and enjoys the gift of parenting, something they thought they'd never have.*

Vancouver, WA, or “Vantucky” as it’s sometimes fondly called, may seem like an odd place for the perfect gay couple to live, but there they are, literally at the end of a cul-de-sac in the suburbs.

The men, Alvin Black, 25, and Seth Hutton, 35, keep a manicured lawn and a lavish, tasteful home. Their haircuts are neat and their clothes stylish. They have all the makings of a gay poster couple (well, except for their dogs; a German Shepherd and a Bulldog might be a little too butch for the stereotype).

But what puts Black and Hutton over the top for Most Envable Couple are their children: twin boys, both with golden hair, scampering around and squealing with joy as only toddlers do.

The couple had the twins via surrogacy, a long process that put to the test their stamina for doing everything right. The process was also exorbitantly expensive and raised new concerns at every turn. But in the end, the couple’s diligence paid off.

The twins, named A.J. and Sterling, are 15 months old. They carry their tiny feet across the plush living room carpet, which was installed right before their birth (until then all the flooring was slick granite). The twins pass a portrait of themselves on a shelf. Its frame is engraved to read “Daddies’ Boys.”

A.J. occasionally toddles up to Black and intentionally makes a face he knows will make his dad laugh. It works. Black says he didn’t anticipate the twins’ entire personalities.

“I knew I wanted children desperately,” Black says, “but I thought that just might not be a reality. And when the opposite became true, it was better than I expected.”

Though both men are strongly family-oriented, they had tabled the idea of having children. But when their relationship began, the topic repeatedly came up.

“We both felt a disconnect,” Hutton says. “Being gay, you don’t have kids, but we wanted to use our life to contribute to another life. We both felt that’s why we were really here – to have children.”

The impulse gradually snowballed into attentive research. The couple considered their options. They ruled out adoption; their preferred method of adoption was almost as expensive as surrogacy, and they were afraid of last minute rejection. They were also considerably risk averse, apprehensive about unknown parts of an adopted child’s or a parent’s past.

They decided on surrogacy, which still left many questions. Who would be the biological father? Would either have hard feelings? Would they do the “swirl?” Those questions were tossed aside with one trip to Oregon Reproductive Medicine; the doctor recommended twins.

“I had seen celebrities do that,” Hutton says, “but I never thought it was an achievable option.”

The doctor came up with a remarkably simple scenario: each twin would be fathered by one of the dads, and both twins would come from the same mother’s eggs. The twins, in effect, would be half brothers, but each twin would be biologically connected to one of the dads.

The twins would be birthed from an unrelated surrogate. The entire process, including egg donation, surrogacy fees, hospital bills and other expenses, would end up costing more than \$100,000 – or at least, that’s when Black and Hutton stopped keeping track.

Black and Hutton painstakingly vetted the egg donor and the surrogate, not only for health and intelligence, but for compatibility. In the thirty pages of information available for each anonymous egg donor, Black and Hutton searched for a hybrid of physical and personality traits that would complement both men.

When the delivery day came, the first baby to be delivered, Sterling, looked strikingly like Hutton, which worried him. What if the second baby looked like him, too?