

May 14, 2005: Sharon and Becky Flynn proudly announce the birth of their daughter Hailey



Heart as well as in the PeaceHealth Nurse Midwifery Center. In the spot marked “father,” Sharon wrote Becky’s name and replaced the word “father” with “other mother.” The Sacred Heart staff person told Sharon that she wasn’t sure the *R-G* would print both mothers’ names. They called the paper and learned that because Becky wasn’t a biological parent, the paper wouldn’t print her name; instead, the announcement would read “May 14, 2005 Flynn – Sharon Flynn, of Eugene, a daughter.” No Becky, as if she hadn’t been there when Sharon got pregnant or during the nine months of waiting. As if she wouldn’t be the one staying home to take care of Hailey during the first year of Hailey’s life. As if she wasn’t a parent. Of course, the person talking to Sharon said, the paper could print the name of the sperm donor as the father. Outraged, the Flynns refused.

Kari Kenzie’s name, like Becky Flynn’s, wouldn’t be listed because she wasn’t a biological parent.

“Everything up to that point had been wonderful,” Sharon says. But the *R-G*’s policy hit her hard: “I couldn’t stop crying and crying,” she says. The story grew as the Flynns found other women and adoptive parents who felt burned by the policy as well. As Sharon went back to work and Becky stayed home to raise Hailey, they kept on trying to get the response they wanted from Dave Baker, the managing editor of the *R-G*. Eventually, they took their complaint public and spread the word in the local LGBT community through Rainbow Rascals, a group for same-sex parents and their kids. They didn’t know that the issue wasn’t new, but they learned quickly that same-sex couples had known — and complained — about the policy for years.

In 1992, Karm Hagedorn and Sheryl Bernheine had been trying for a while to have a child. “Sheryl kind of wanted to be pregnant,” Hagedorn remembers. They finally met someone who knew a good, local donor, and Bailey Bernheine was born in November at Sacred Heart. Hagedorn, who grew up in Eugene and had been involved in the lesbian community for a long time, says that despite the fact that she and Bernheine were one of the first local lesbian couples to have a child, they had already heard about the policy at the *R-G*. So instead of crossing out “father” or writing in “other mother” or “also a mother,” Hagedorn simply wrote her name in the “father” space. “[The name] Karm was different enough that nobody blinked,” she remembers, “or if they did, they blinked in the right direction.” The birth announcement carried both Hagedorn and Bernheine’s names. But as the Flynns learned, other couples both long ago and more recently had not been so lucky.

Adelka Shawn and Alicia Hays had their son Jackson in December 1993. Without calling the parents, the paper omitted Shawn’s name when they printed the birth announcement for Jackson although, Shawn says, the envelope containing the congratulations and copies of the birth announcement came addressed to both of them. Local LGBT activist Sally Sheklow wrote a letter of complaint to the *R-G* for Shawn and Hays. And when Caleb Donahue’s parents, Chris and Anne, had him at the PeaceHealth Nurse Midwifery Center seven years ago, they didn’t even

## Maters or Paters Familias?

Same-sex parents want their props from *The Register-Guard*

BY SUZI STEFFEN

**B**ecky Dinwoodie and Sharon Flynn were waiting for a plane in the Denver airport in late 1997, returning home from visiting Dinwoodie’s parents. They started playing Scrabble on the floor. This attracted the attention of several young children, and the kids came over to see what was up. “There was one little girl who didn’t even know how to spell,” Dinwoodie says, “and Sharon told her, ‘Here, take some letters, I’ll help you,’ and it was right then I knew that I wanted to have children with this woman.”

They waited until Dinwoodie finished law school and Flynn finished her medical residency, and they looked for jobs in a “gay-friendly community.” In Vermont, they celebrated a civil union; they held a ceremony in Massachusetts, and Dinwoodie took Flynn’s last name. “We knew we wanted a family, and we didn’t want anyone to think that one mom was the real mom and the other was just someone the real mom was dating,” Becky Flynn explains.

They moved to Eugene, where Becky had done some grass-roots organizing for the Human Rights Campaign in 1996. “We were looking for a place to put down roots,” Becky says, and what they’d heard about

Eugene’s progressive, university town atmosphere impressed them. Plus, they’re both runners, and the Track Town image proved irresistible. Sharon started working at Sacred Heart Medical Center, and Becky clerked for the Oregon Supreme Court. They bought a house. And Sharon’s biological alarm clock went off.

“We talked about adoption,” Sharon says, as their daughter climbs over her lap in their College Hill house. Becky says, “But Sharon just really wanted to be pregnant!” Becky’s cousin stepped up as a donor so that Sharon and Becky’s child would share genes with both sides of the family, and they drafted a contract so he signed away parental legal rights or obligations. “We were very fortunate; I got pregnant the first time we tried,” Sharon says. And for the months of Sharon’s pregnancy, everyone from birthing class peers to the nurses at Sacred Heart treated them just like any other pregnant couple. Becky says, “We felt really embraced by the community.”

Hailey Flynn was born on May 14, 2005, a couple of days after Sharon was induced. And a staffer from Sacred Heart asked Sharon to fill out the paperwork for *The Register-Guard* to put Hailey’s birth announcement in the paper. That’s standard procedure at McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center and Sacred