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PHOTOS

Baby LOVE!



Christina Aguilera
Wedding Details



BRITNEY
& KEVIN AT
HOME WITH
SON SEAN
PRESTON

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23 SCOOP

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ON THE COVER Photograph by Mark Liddell. All rights reserved. Upper right inset by Alex Berliner/BEImages



Shewanda and Carl Harris and their son Keenen, born Oct. 31.

The Gift of Life

Nancy Hemenway, who overcame infertility, helps other couples get costly IVF treatment

Photograph by TAMARA REYNOLDS

The baby boy weighed in at 6 lbs. 14 oz., had his mother's eyes and his father's forehead—and, holding her tiny Keenen, Shewanda Harris was moved to tears. "To see him is like your heart just opens up," says the new mother from Vicksburg, Miss. "I still don't believe I had him."

A baby's arrival is often hailed as a miracle by exhausted and exhilarated parents, but Keenen's Oct. 31 birth really did defy odds. Not only did Harris, 32, and husband Carl, 41, struggle with infertility for three years, they finally succeeded, in large part, because of the kindness of a stranger a thousand miles away. Nancy Hemenway, a 55-year-old former special education teacher from Fairfax, Va., won her own battle with infertility a decade ago and has since made it her life's work to help other couples get access to infertility treatment they can't afford. "I don't believe a person's purse should ever be a determining factor in whether they have a baby," Hemenway says.



Hemenway (center) in Sept. and with moms-to-be Melody Frees and Shewanda Harris.

Sadly, it often is: A single cycle of in vitro fertilization can cost upwards of \$15,000, making such procedures off-limits to millions of American couples whose insurance doesn't cover the treatment. Last year Hemenway's nonprofit group, the International Council on Infertility Information Dissemination (INCIID), began soliciting doctors and drug companies, garnering \$1.3 million in donated IVF services and fertility medications. Since then she has arranged IVF cycles for 39 couples. Keenen is the first baby to result from those efforts. Another couple, Jim and Melody Frees of Litchfield Park, Ariz., had a baby boy, Benjamin Edward, Nov. 21. "He's just perfect," says Melody.

No one knows better than Hemenway what a Herculean feat having a baby can be. Married to David, 54, a high school teacher, for 17 years, she was nearly three months into her first pregnancy in 1991 when she miscarried. "It felt like having your heart ripped out of your chest," she says. "I screamed into a pillow at the top of my lungs." Enduring a series of treatments and setbacks—she miscarried three more times over four years—she was researching fertility treatments online when she began exchanging e-mails with two other women who had also experienced miscarriages. Together, in 1994, they came up with the idea for INCIID, an information clearinghouse that would help educate couples about the range of infertility treatments available. After spending some \$6,000 on IVF treatments (insurance covered most of the cost), Hemenway gave birth in 1995 to daughter Zoe



Hemenway at home with husband David (left), the Freeses and the Harris.

(conceived through a frozen embryo transfer) and launched the organization. The couple adopted daughter Bekah, 5, in 2001.

Hemenway kept hearing from heartbroken couples who were good candidates for fertility treatment—but couldn't pay for it. "We knew we had to help," she says. Hemenway approached Dr. Geoff Sher, a Las Vegas-based infertility doctor, who agreed to donate IVF cycles, and soon doctors in 10 states had signed up. Hemenway limited the pool of applicants to couples with household income under \$65,000, and a committee began selecting would-be parents last summer.

By that time, Shewanda and Carl

Harris—together since 1994 and married since 2002—had all but given up on having a baby together. Carl had two daughters from an earlier marriage. Shewanda suffered two ectopic pregnancies, which led to surgery to remove an ovary and one fallopian tube. "With one ovary, I thought, 'What is my chance?'" Neither Shewanda, a former retail clerk, nor Carl, a casino slot-machine manager, had insurance to cover IVF. Then Shewanda happened upon the INCIID Web site and sent an application. They got the call from Hemenway in December. "I just started crying," says Shewanda.

In February she underwent her first IVF treatment in Los Angeles and got pregnant on the first try. And nine months later, Keenen was born, arriving on Halloween morning. Nothing could be more gratifying to Hemenway, who is determined to add to that happy score. "I want to give away the store," she says.

By Thomas Fields-Meyer. Melody Simmons in Fairfax

THE HIGH COST OF IVF: \$12,000 - \$15,000

According to Resolve: the National Infertility Association, **only a quarter of employers offer insurance for infertility.** As a result, as many as 50 percent of American couples who fail to conceive **do not seek treatment for financial reasons,** according to the group's estimates.

FOR MORE INFO ON IVF VISIT WWW.INCIID.ORG