

The real 'New Normal'

Posted: December 14th, 2012 | [News](#), [Top Story](#) | [No Comments](#)

San Diego lesbian couple give birth on 12-12-12, their second

By Anthony King | GSD Editor

Christy and Cherie Kitterman went into their regularly scheduled doctor appointment on Friday, Dec. 7 knowing they were close to giving birth to their second child. They did not know, however, that the baby would be born five days later on Dec. 12, or more aptly 12-12-12.



(l to r) Christy, Chloe and Cherie Kitterman welcomed their newest addition, Charli, on 12-12-12. (Courtesy Beck Ellman Heald)

Featured in the local TV news, the birth was one of dozens that occurred on the special date. However, it is more meaningful than the numerical moniker, as the child – a girl named Charli – is the second for the couple done via surrogacy, a procedure that is becoming easier and more common for LGBT couples.

"We got married four years ago, and we both knew we wanted to have kids," Cherie Kitterman said. After thinking it through and weighing their options, they said they chose fertility, adding that it was easy for them to decide Cherie would carry each pregnancy.

"There was no question that it would be me," she said. Additionally, the couple worked hard to match the sperm donor to Christy's characteristics, including hair color and similar likes and dislikes.

Their first daughter, Chloe, was born two years ago.

The Kitterman's fertility doctor for both successful pregnancies was reproductive endocrinologist Samuel Wood, the medical director at The Reproductive Science Center. The center's office in La Jolla, Calif. has become one of the most sought-out clinics for couples seeking fertility and surrogacy.

Wood said his team facilitated the first successful surrogacy in San Diego, and that the process is fairly simple: you need an egg, sperm and a uterus.

"It's really very simple, except in this case ... one or more things are missing within the couple themselves," Wood said of working with LGBT patients over heterosexual ones. "That's really the only difference."

The Kitterman's first pregnancy was done via Intrauterine Insemination, or IUI. The second, however needed to be more aggressive, and the couple decided to do an In Vitro Fertilization, or IVF.

"When I first saw them, they had done four IUI cycles at another center," Wood said. While successful with an IUI for their first pregnancy, due to lower amounts, or vials, of sperm from their original donor, they chose IVF for the second.

As surrogacy is a growing option for LGBT couples and individuals who want to have children, understanding the needs of all interests in the process is becoming more important, and LGBT couples seeking surrogacy is become more commonplace.

The recent NBC sitcom, "The New Normal," follows a gay couple that opts for surrogacy, and while many mistakes are presented in the show, Wood said he appreciated that it was available, as it educates and increases awareness of LGBT couples looking at their options for parenthood.

"Anything like that, unless it's derogatory about it, is going to be a positive," he said, adding that his practice has seen an increase in LGBT couples. "There is a lot of misinformation, so the first visit really is about education," Wood said.

Mindy Berkson, an international surrogacy and fertility expert based in Chicago, helps couples work through that misinformation. Berkson is an

infertility consultant, and said she represents the intended parents in the sometimes-complicated process.

“Surrogacy is just one of those topics that are so overwhelming and daunting,” she said. “You really need to get education on what you need in order to pull together a surrogacy arrangement. That’s why I think it’s so important to work with an infertility consultant, to help you pull together those pieces.”

With offices in Chicago, Berkson said she often works with couples throughout the world, helping them navigate the local, state and federal laws of each individual case. The laws, she said, help determine the rights of everyone involved.

“When you’re exploring surrogacy, legally, each state has different laws,” she said. “Some states are friendly to LGBT, some states are not. Some states are friendly to single individuals, some states are not.”

California is a “very good state” for LGBT couples and individuals, Berkson said, but every option needs to be explored.

“All of these little nuances play into your legal situation, and your legal situation is so important because that’s how you’re going to get your name on the birth certificate,” she said.

The Kitterman’s, who live in El Cajon, Calif., did not use an infertility consultant like Berkson, however they both said having an extra resource was a good idea. Cherie Kitterman said they have become the “go-to” couple for information and reassurance.

“It is overwhelming, and people just don’t know where to start,” she said. “We have shared our story – we are very, very open about it – and I’ll give pointers and tips to anyone that is willing to listen.”