



# Hope Springs Anew

Three families. Three incredible journeys.  
(Turn the page to learn what these  
three beautiful children have in common.)

Stories by Amand Bedgood • Photos by Penny Moore



# Grace Ann

## April 7, 2009

### Beth and Eric McCleery

Call it that woman's intuition, call it divine nudging. But, Beth McCleery knew something was wrong. It was 2005 and she was in her 20's when she made her first visit to a fertility specialist.

"I just had a feeling something wasn't right," she says.

Beth's suspicions were confirmed – she had some kind of blockage. And after some testing and minor surgeries for the blockage she and husband Eric tried less invasive (and less expensive) options before it became clear that pregnancy wasn't going to happen without in vitro fertilization.

But, the cost would prove too great at the time and so they waited.

"Then everybody you know is pregnant. You're trying so hard to do something that seems impossible while people all around you are getting pregnant. I was never resentful. I was very happy for them. And very sad for me. Sad for the family I wasn't having," Beth says.

It was a trial for Beth who says she had, until that point, led a charmed life. She learned in the coming months that the entire thing was completely out of her control.

"It was something I wanted so badly and no amount of hard work could make it happen and that was devastating and I felt very much like a failure," she says.

The emotions ran the gamut and Beth faced what many women do in her situation.

"You can't put it into words nor do you want to and you want someone to automatically understand without telling them," she says. "For two years our entire day to day life was about baby making. Then I kind of shut down. I was so tired of being unsuccessful and being sad."

On a long shot, the McCleery's applied for the Gift of Hope, which would only be the beginning of their journey. After months and years of trying with Eric's fertility never questioned the couple faced an obstacle they never imagined once awarded the Gift of Hope – when the enthusiastic couple headed in for IVF they learned Eric had no sperm.

"We hadn't expected it because he had an above average count before and it scared us that something was wrong. This was not infertility but something else," she says. "They found a tumor in his brain."

The tumor was benign and medication and a following procedure proved fruitful in bringing Eric back to above average and a hopeful Beth felt sure she would conceive thanks to the Gift of Hope.

"There was no plan for how I would cope if I didn't get pregnant. In my mind I thought it would end with a baby. I never thought it wouldn't work," she says.

And yet, when she learned that the IVF worked, she was shocked.

"I was beside myself. There are no words," she says.

But, for days, Eric found the words, which were music to her ears.

"Eric kept saying 'we are pregnant. My wife is pregnant.' To hear him say the words. That felt good. I had never been pregnant before and it was all brand new to me. I was thrilled," she says.

She was elated to wake each morning and say the words again.

"Every morning to say I'm pregnant and there's a little person inside of me. I was so excited."

She was also scared. Scared something would go wrong. Scared she could do something wrong. Eat something wrong. Lay on her stomach.

"I went to the ER four times because I thought something was wrong and every time they would send me home. Insurance said you can't do

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# Jagger

## October 28, 2009

### Rachel and Tony Bourque

Rachel Bourque still remembers what it felt like to sit at baby showers devastated. To put a smile on her face while believing in her heart she would not have children. The teacher, who always dreamed of being a stay at home mom, had learned at a young age that it wasn't likely she and her husband would ever conceive.

She and husband Tony tried for a year to get pregnant before they began testing. They would soon learn that Tony's sperm count was zero with one percent motility. It was something that could have been attributed to his appendix rupturing and the subsequent days. But, there was no real answer.

"They told us to look at adoption. We were devastated," Rachel says noting that there was not enough sperm for in vitro as an option.

Tony, who was in a stressful job situation pastoring a church, and Rachel, put babies on the back burner. A short time later Tony started a new church and despite the great undertaking found a relief in his stress levels.

"Stress has a lot to do with fertility and we got him retested and all his counts had doubled. It wasn't where it needed to be but they said we could do in vitro and we talked prices," Rachel says.

The couple soon realized affording IVF was not an option. She had moved from teaching at a private school to public to make ends meet, while Tony didn't take a salary because of the opening of the new church. Then while Tony was preaching one night, Rachel saw the Gift of Hope on the news and thought she might as well apply.

"I wrote the letter – just one page of our story and how we couldn't have kids and it was my dream to be a stay-at-home mom," she says.

Months later while on a field trip with her students at the zoo, the call came.

"He (Dr. Stormont) said 'I have something to tell you. Can you stop and pull over the bus?' I jumped out so I can hear him. I lost it when he told me. The kids came out of the bus and I was boo hooing," she laughs.

She quickly called Tony who couldn't understand his emotional wife.

"He thought I was in a wreck. I was screaming at the top of my lungs and then I have to ride the bus back with these kids trying to explain what happened," she laughs.

Then the physical process of the IVF began, which was an unusual one for Rachel who had no actual infertility issues.

"My body went crazy," she says.

The process left her with cysts and complications and the couple who live in Lake Charles would drive to Lafayette for treatments with interruptions from hurricanes and other obstacles before she was able to complete the treatment.

"It was a blur," she says.

Her pregnancy would prove a difficult one leaving her with morning sickness that was actually more like all day sickness from the beginning to the end. When Jagger was born, a C-section was necessary and Rachel found herself one of the rare cases who faced infection and had to go back to the hospital within days of her son's birth.

"I look back and think how blessed we are. What did I do to deserve that? It's truly amazing."



# Hope

## April 14, 2007

### Laura and Terry Hughes

Laura Hughes had given up hope. She had come to terms with the reality that she and her husband would not likely have children. In their seven years of marriage she had become pregnant twice – both of which were dangerous ectopic pregnancies that left doctors recommending that she not conceive again unless it was through in vitro fertilization.

But, the cost would prove an obstacle too great – as would the cost of adoption.

"It's not as easy as people think," she says of the financial burdens of both adoption and fertility treatments. "We were resolved that we would not have kids and deal with it from there. Just when we had a sense of peace is when we won."

Laura heard about the Gift of Hope and the night of the deadline wrote a letter pouring out their hearts. But, never thought in her wildest dreams they would be chosen. But, they were the first couple chosen and soon she began IVF, with great trepidation.

She took no chances. Despite advice to rest for a few days after the treatment, Laura chose to take off work for ten days, she says with a laugh.

"I didn't move other than to get up and go to the bathroom," she says.

A blood test at the doctor's office would be the definitive proof that the IVF had worked. They drew her blood and during the hour wait she and husband Terry went for breakfast.

"We came back and when they told me I was pregnant it was so surreal," she says today as four-year-old Hope bustles in the background.

Her pregnancy was an uneventful one, although she was "sick like a dog." But, she says quickly that was quite all right with her.

"I was ready to take whatever. I was fine," she says.

With her first two ectopic pregnancies, one of which sent her to the hospital in shock, she didn't feel sick in the way most pregnant women do.

"I felt normal being sick. Being pregnant was what I thought it would be and it was exciting and I appreciated it," she says.

Laura says although she believed whole heartedly the couple had come to terms that another pregnancy wouldn't happen, she realized when pregnant with Hope that she had not.

"I didn't realize how long I had waited for this," she says gratefully.

Laura was scheduled to be induced on April 17 and despite doctors' beliefs that it was very unlikely her water would break at home or she would go into labor before that date, the unlikely was, of course, just what happened.

"On Friday the 13th my water broke. It's not like it is in the movies," she says with a laugh.

In the melee of her labor, Laura laughs remembering how she watched Terry back out of the driveway to head to the hospital – without her in the car.

"He got so nervous he left me," she says.

The delivery was 24 hours and yet she says very easy overall without any complications. And now the woman, who thought children would never

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## Grace Ann *from 38*

this once a week," she says with a laugh.

In spite of her concerns, Grace Ann arrived without incident – other than being more than nine pounds and requiring a C-section.

"I couldn't stop kissing her and telling her I love her," she says. "It was the best feeling ever. It can't be recreated. It's bliss."

In the months that have followed Beth says motherhood is, in a word, "crazy."

"The happiest and most fulfilled I've ever been and at the same time I second guess everything I do," she says.

And the experience has changed she and Eric's relationship from his health scare to pregnancy and now parenthood.

"Knowing he was okay and the end result was this beautiful, perfect gift from God. We look at one another and think 'why did God choose to bless us so much?' Eric and I struggle on a daily basis to give as much as we have received from so many people including Dr. Storment and Women's and Children's and those that helped us have a baby."

## Jagger *from 39*

But, for a couple who thought children might not be in the cards for them at all, it was all more than worth enduring for Jagger.

While the IVF and pregnancy were hard on Rachel, the experience of not being able to have children was a trying one particularly for Tony.

"It was tough on both but especially him. The one thing he wanted to give me he couldn't," she says.

And as with many trials, the experience has brought the couple closer together.

"We couldn't have done this on our own – Dr. Storment and God," she says thankfully. "I look at Jagger every day and can't get over that he's here. It still blows my mind."

And as the days pass and Jagger (a little fireball) grows, Rachel muses at the miracle that is their son.

"I look back and think how blessed we are. What did I do to deserve that? It's truly amazing."

## Hope *from 40*

happen for her, has quit her job and finds herself feeling bittersweet as her daughter prepares for school.

"I'm so appreciative of it that I quit my job and we do without a lot of things. I'm with her every day. This is it for us," she says.

Even four years later, Laura says Hope in her life continues to make her a grateful person in a new way.

"It puts things in perspective. Everyone gets so caught up in the everyday and I had to stop and realize what a gift she is. It slowed us down a lot," she says.

And while Laura is quick to say that life is anything but slow with an active four-year-old, the experience has brought she and Terry to a new place of appreciation for each other and for life.

"It's been humbling. Life changing. It makes you realize how precious life is."