

# WAITING

## The Gift of Hope offers one couple the chance to conceive

By Amanda Bedgood

Shawna Cormier never thought she would have trouble getting pregnant. And yet, six years after she and her husband, Colby, decided to start a family they are still waiting.

"I've never had any problems and I thought it would be easy and take a few months," Shawna says.

But, like many women Shawna soon learned that having a baby was going to be more of a challenge than she could have conceived. And more costly. Today, though, the couple is filled with renewed hope after winning the Gift of Hope that will give them a free IVF treatment and the chance for a baby.

"That's the only thing standing in the way of some people having a baby – because insurance doesn't cover something that's really wrong with them," says Amelie Storment, who has been instrumental in bringing the Gift of Hope to fruition.

Her husband, Dr. John Storment of Fertility & Women's Health Center,

brought the idea up when he was approached by a national organization to participate on a national level with something similar.

"It would be a scholarship for IVF and they choose who the couple would be and we could get a couple from Ohio or something like that,"

**"They said there's no reason why you shouldn't be pregnant and we kept trying and trying,"**

Amelie says. "There are so many people right here that can't afford to have the procedure done."

They got Women's and Children's Hospitals involved and kicked off The Gift of Hope in Acadiana for local couples. Each year, a couple is chosen from Acadiana to receive a free IVF treatment.

"All the letters. It's so heartbreaking. They want a baby so badly and their bodies can't do it," Amelie says. "Many have spent thousands on ovulation meds or surgery and still haven't been able to solve the problems."

The Cormiers have just such a story.

After a year of trying to get pregnant, the couple began looking for answers. After testing,

they eventually learned Colby had a low sperm count, which was resolved with medicine. And yet, still no baby.

"They said there's no reason why you shouldn't be pregnant and we kept trying and trying," Shawna says.

She switched doctors. She had more treatments.

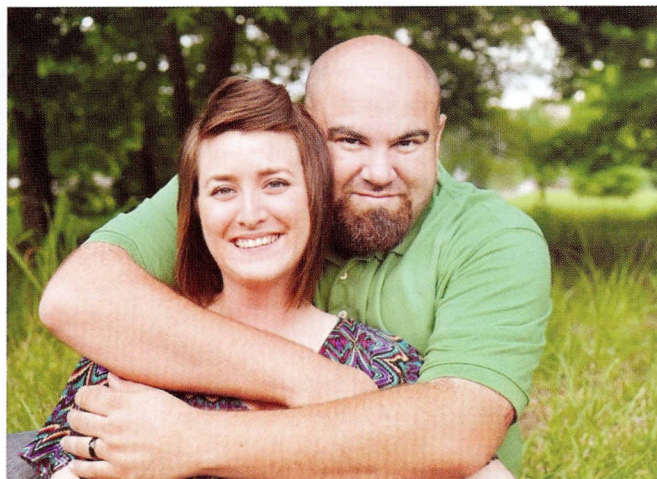
"It's an emotional rollercoaster. When the treatment doesn't work ... it's devastating. It's like somebody rips your heart out," Shawna says. "Everybody around you gets pregnant and you want to be happy for everybody. And you feel like a horrible person because you want to be happy for them and you're not."

Shawna is not alone. More than 7 percent of women are infertile and more than 7 million women have used infertility services. Of infertile couples, about a third of them find no explanation for the condition.

"They can't find a reason why we are not pregnant," Shawna says. "Hopefully this works."

The Cormiers are grateful for the opportunity and Shawna says she has been connecting with other women in the mean time.

"It's an awesome thing for them to do for infertile couples. You don't hear much about it. But, I'm not shy about it. If I can help someone else ... since going through this women message me on Facebook and ask me questions and we become friends. If I can help other women not feel isolated and talk to someone about it, I will."



The Cormiers were awarded the 2012 Gift of Hope. After six years of trying to conceive, the couple have been given a free IVF treatment.