

# I am a Gestational Carrier because...

*My journey to become a gestational carrier really began in September of 1987. That was the year I met Kerry. We were in 6th grade at Scott Highlands Middle School and quickly became the best of friends. Though we ended up at different High Schools, we still remained friends due to our shared social circle and love of music and choir.*

*After graduating, Kerry and I lost track of each other during our college years. Thankfully, (by the grace of Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook), we were able to reconnect in 2008. It was during that time that I became aware of Kerry and her husband Todd's **infertility struggles**.*

*In 2011, Kerry was able to get pregnant with twins using IVF treatment. Sadly, her children Jacob and Eleanor were born severely prematurely at 23.6 weeks gestation. Jake lived for 12 hours, while Ellie passed away 3 days after her birth. I cannot begin to describe to you how **awful it is to watch your friends suffer this kind of loss**. It's absolutely heartbreaking. Soul crushing. To make matters worse, a week after her children passed away, Kerry was diagnosed with Thyroid Cancer. Her subsequent treatments left her body **unable to carry her remaining embryos**, so they began to pursue adoption.*

*Kerry and Todd spent several years on the adoption list, twice nearly being chosen by birth mothers. It was a rollercoaster ride. Once again, it pained me to see two good hearted people struggling to grow a family they so desperately wanted. In June of 2014, I had an epiphany. At least, that's what I call it. It was a spiritual awakening that called me to **offer my assistance**. "What if I could help carry their baby for them?" I had been blessed with 3 healthy children of my own.*

*Pregnancy had been easy for me to achieve and while my husband Kyle and I were done growing our own family, I knew my body was still capable of carrying a child. You ask the question. Why? Why did I do this? Simple. My children are my whole world and I **couldn't imagine my life without them**. All of us who walk this earth are one catastrophe away from needing help from someone, at some point in our lifetimes. If it had been me struggling with infertility, I would have hoped and prayed someone might have offered to*



# I am a Gestational Carrier because...

help me. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It's that simple. My soul understood the deepest desires of Kerry and Todd's heart... because I AM a parent. I understood their yearning and suffering.

So I decided to offer my help. I have told people many, many times that **this journey was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life**. It's as if someone has given me a debit card filled with love and gratitude and I get to make daily withdrawals from that love account. I get the joy of seeing Kerry and Todd parent their son. I would encourage anyone, if you are given the opportunity to help someone...and I mean TRULY help someone. Do it. It is the most amazing and glorious experience.

Pregnancy isn't easy and delivery certainly isn't a cake walk! But I can say, I would do it again in a heartbeat to help reunite that little boy with his parents.

## Your thoughts about gestational surrogacy...

The clinic that we used had very strict guidelines and protocol set up. **I had to be medically, psychologically and financially vetted before I could become a surrogate**. Meaning, I had to be tested and screened for both my physical and mental health. I also had to prove that I wasn't receiving any financial assistance from the Government. These 3 protocols are designed to "weed out" those who are not fit for surrogacy. At no point did I feel taken advantage of, coerced or exploited. I volunteered to do this. In fact, I find it highly offensive to be categorized by this commission as someone who was "exploited".

**I have my Bachelor's Degree in Child Development from the University of Minnesota. I am a substitute teacher in school district 196 and my husband and I are financially secure.** I didn't receive any compensation to carry my friend's child. My decision to be a surrogate was based solely on my desire to help them achieve their dreams of parenthood. Surrogacy is rooted in LOVE and compassion. To label it anything else is erroneous and hurtful.



— Ann Estes, Rosemount, MN 55068

# I am a Gestational Carrier because...

*Having children was one of the most amazing experiences in my life. I actually never thought of being a surrogate until a very close friend had struggled to become pregnant, **it was devastating to see the pain and struggles they went through**, especially considering I never had to put any effort into becoming pregnant with my own two children. I decided to become a surrogate only if I could find IP's (intended parents) that I had a connection with, and I did. I worked with the most amazing couple ever. My surro twins are now three. I even traveled to Sweden to celebrate their 2nd birthday with them and still Skype with them every couple of months.*

*It was a great way to show my children that life isn't fair and not everyone can have children that wants them. **We were simply helping a family have what we have.***

## Your thoughts about gestational surrogacy...

*I would simply talk through each step of the process. A surrogate knows exactly what she is getting herself into because of how in depth they talk about each step and why it is done the way it is.*

— Katie Harry, Zimmerman, MN 55398



# I am a Gestational Carrier because...

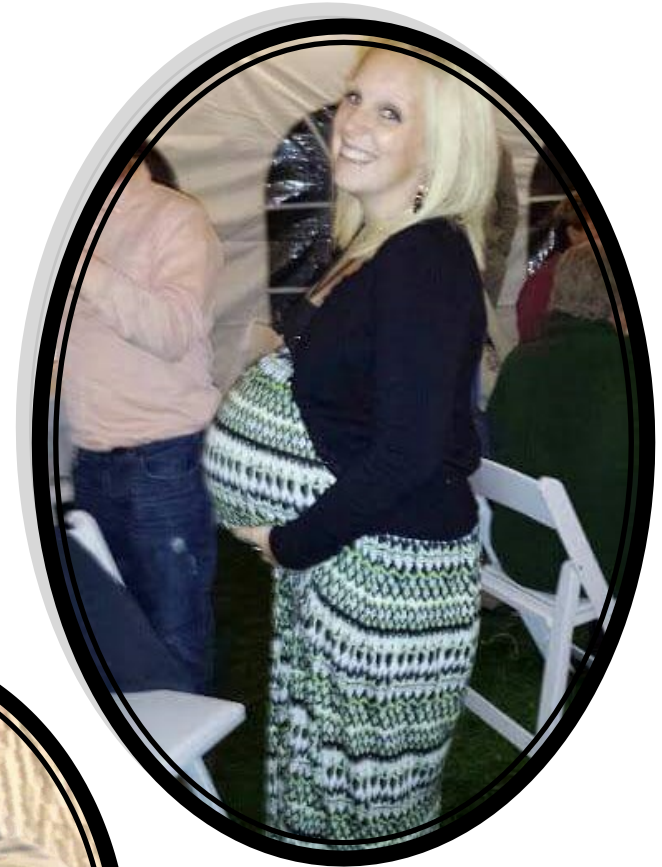
*I have been a carrier one time, carrying twin boys.*

***I have four children of my own.** Getting pregnant, being pregnant, labor & delivery, were all very easy to me. After meeting people that struggled with fertility, I felt very strongly that I could be a carrier successfully and give someone the experience of having children.*

*My family has gained an entire family! My kids have gained a whole group of people who love and adore them, an amazing support network. **The experience truly changed our world for the better** and was overwhelmingly wonderful for all involved.*

## **Your thoughts about gestational surrogacy...**

*Validate the fact that there are concerns about potential exploitation because I believe that the possibility is there, but when it is done properly, it leaves no wiggle room for error. I had legal representation of my own-separate from my ip's (intended parents), psychological testing on both myself and my partner, background study checks-both criminal and financial, medical screenings by both my own personal obgyn and the ivf physician working with us. My partner also had medical screenings and bloodwork done, hours of telephone and Skype screenings with social workers and those at the agency. I think people forget that a **LARGE** percentage of women are in fact turned down to be a surrogate. **Not just anyone can be a surrogate and to make it through the approval process itself, you need to be stable, educated, and medically cleared.***



# I am a Gestational Carrier because...

*A close friend couldn't become pregnant & I offered. When she chose not to have kids then I sought out people who wanted to and couldn't. I delivered in January 2016 and I will be starting the process again in a few months.*

*It was a great experience for my family. We gained amazing friends in the family we worked with. I was paid so that small sum paid off my student loans.*

*I was very uncomfortable towards the end making it hard to engage much physically with my family but that only lasted for a few weeks.*

## **Your thoughts about gestational surrogacy...**

*I think as long as proper screening tools are used nobody gets exploited. Everybody should have a legal contract, their own lawyer, and a psych eval.*

**— Rachel Stoltz, St. Cloud, MN 56304**



# I am a Gestational Carrier because...

*I have been a surrogate once and I did it to **help a loving and deserving couple become parents and have a family of their own.** I love being a mom and **couldn't imagine if I wasn't able to have children and wouldn't want that sadness on others.** I have PCOS so I know the scare of possibly being unable to have children and that was one of the worst feelings in the world. I want to take those feelings and make them better by helping create families!*

*The benefits are tremendous. **There is no better feeling than seeing the intended parents hold their baby for the first time!!** I not only helped create a family and got to enjoy pregnancy but I made a life long friendship. My journey was one of the best experiences in my life. Amazing! I love watching him grow up with his parents and to see how happy he and his parents are. Doesn't' get any better than that!*

## Your thoughts about gestational surrogacy...

*I think the women need to be smart about surrogacy and **sign agreements so everyone is on the same page** which I think happens 99% of the time. Make sure everyone agrees on all aspects of the journey. I really do not feel there is a lot of exploitation happening. Sure, there is always a bad apple in everything we do but that doesn't mean that's normal and if that happens it's going to happen with or without laws about it.*

— Colette Friedrichs, Maple Grove, MN 55369

