

Gay couple plan to have fifth child

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Brooke Verity, flanked by Michael Meehan, left, and Thomas Dysarz, will have another child for the gay couple, who already are the parents of quadruplets.

Surrogate again to bear baby for Lexington men

By MURRAY EVANS
Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — This time around, it's not quite so chaotic for Michael Meehan, Thomas Dysarz and Brooke Verity. Or, to put it another way, having only one baby — as opposed to four — seems to be a lot less stressful.

Of course, stress is a relative term for Meehan and Dysarz, the Lexington gay men who parent a set of 10-month-old quadruplets. Verity was surrogate mother for the quadruplets, whose father is Meehan, and she's now pregnant with another child, whose father is Dysarz. Both pregnancies were a result of in vitro fertilization.

It was important to all parties involved that the babies from both pregnancies be related, which is why Verity agreed to again be surrogate for Dysarz, 32, and Meehan, 37.

Verity should give birth in January or February, she said.

"We wanted to have kids for both of us, not just one," Dysarz said.

When the quadruplets were born in July, worldwide attention focused on Dysarz, Meehan and Verity. Meehan estimated they received about 500 media requests. Verity declined to be interviewed before the births then, but the 24-year-old Nicholasville woman is more comfortable talking about the situation now.

"You can't run from the media. You might as well just answer their questions," Verity said. "Everybody thinks you want publicity, but you don't. You answer their questions to get them to leave you alone, basically."

Not all of the attention was positive. Fred Phelps, the pastor of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan. — a congregation known for its strong anti-gay stance — brought a group to Lexington in November to protest the baptism of the quadruplets. The same day, a much larger group attended an event called Rally for a Hate-Free Lexington.

The couple also heard opposition to their being parents from callers to a couple of radio talk shows they were on, Meehan said. "But they're not really against the children. They're more just against homosexuals in general. This just gives them a sounding board for it. But there's not been any local people who have made an issue of it, to us directly at least."

Verity also has three children of her own and is a regular customer at one of two Lexington salons owned by Mee-

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han and Dysarz. Her kids were running around the salon one time, and Dysarz, a hairstylist, told Verity the children were cute.

"She said, 'You can keep them.' I said, 'I would. I've been looking for a surrogate.' She said she'd been looking for a couple to work with," Dysarz said.

Meehan and Dysarz originally planned to have two children — one fathered by Meehan, the other by Dysarz. Doctors implanted four fertilized eggs in Verity, hoping one would take. Instead, all four did, quite unexpectedly. The babies — three boys, one girl — were born 10 weeks prematurely, but Meehan said all are developing normally for their age.

"They say it takes about two years (for premature babies) to get fully caught up, but they're catching up pretty rapidly — physically, mentally, developmentally," Meehan said.

"They don't show any signs of adverse effects from the prematurity."

When the babies were born, Meehan and Dysarz rearranged their schedules to care for Michael, Tristan, Jacob and their sister, Taylor. Meehan, who also has a law practice, is home on the weekends.

Dysarz cut back his salon work schedule to four days. Thus far, the men have had to employ only one nanny for the children.

There's also the cost of taking care of the quadruplets, which Dysarz said

runs about \$2,000 a month. He said he and Meehan will change about 30,000 diapers before the quadruplets are out of them.

"You just have to deal with it," Meehan said. "They're such good kids. It's just joy to watch them develop and grow."

After enduring the sometimes unwanted attention after the quadruplets' birth, Dysarz and Meehan decided to go ahead and have another surrogate pregnancy. Again, four fertilized eggs were implanted, but this time, only one took.

The two men are more at ease with the attention now "because you get used to it," Dysarz said.

The addition of a fifth child will mean changes for the couple. The men plan to move from their three-bedroom house on the Kentucky River and hope to find a larger house in Lexington.

Also, they'll probably hire an au pair, in addition to keeping the nanny.

They're not ruling out having more children, but for now five is enough, they said.

"I'd do it again," Verity said.