

In the second of our series of real life stories featuring the stars of a new print campaign being run by surrogacy agency, Growing Generations, we meet Richard and Tony, and their twins Aiden and Austin, who share their path to parenthood with us.

# HAPPY FAMILIES

**W**e met in 2000, at Richard's birthday party which was being hosted by some mutual friends of ours, and stayed buddies for about a year before we started dating seriously. We have now been together for eleven years and legally married for four and half years of that time.

If you remember, in 2008, same-sex marriage was made legal for about six months in California, and we were one of the lucky eighteen thousand that got married, and we are still legally married even though the laws have since changed back. We are really hopeful that things will change soon here in the US for same sex couples and that legal recognition may finally be given to those who wish to get married.

## TALK OF CHILDREN

It can only have been a couple of years that we were together before the topic of wanting kids came up and we agreed that having a family was something we both wanted to pursue. Neither of us really knew how we would get our family, we just knew we wanted to give it our best shot.

Around that same time friends of ours were going through the process of surrogacy which was great for us as we got regular updates on their journey and we could ask all the questions we had which opened up our eyes to the possibilities of us maybe using surrogacy to have a child.

In 2004, we joined a local parenting group called 'The Pop Luck Club', which is for gay dads. They were hosting an annual 'resource and information' day where lots of agencies attended and gave out their information, almost like a mini-conference, and that is where we first met 'Growing Generations'.

## FINDING THE FUNDS

At that time, conservative estimations for surrogacy were in the range of \$100,000. This figure has gone up and down a little since then but for us it was a huge financial commitment which needed a lot of thought. Luckily we had some savings and we were able to get a second mortgage on our home which helped massively towards our surrogacy fees.

All in all it took us two years to be financially ready to start the process and in February 2006 we signed up with Growing Generations. We had gone to see other clinics but really liked Growing Generations and it just felt right. They were so inclusive with their services and really experienced in all the problems that could crop up during the process and how to deal with them, which made us feel confident that we were in good hands. We also loved that the clinic was founded by gay folk, Stuart Bell and Dr. Kim Bergman, who had helped a lot of other gay couples achieve their dream so we felt completely relaxed and understood.





### **LOOKING FOR A SUITABLE SURROGATE**

It took about six to seven months to find the right surrogate for us. For many that sounds like a long time to wait but for us it worked out fine. We found that we had this nice built in time frame to get used to things. All of our friends were really supportive and we had three different baby showers which was great fun. They made sure that we were fully equipped with toys, clothes and bottles to look after an army of children!

Growing Generations matched us up with a wonderful surrogate who was so easy going, and it wasn't long before we were collecting eggs from our donor which we fertilised with both our sperm. Our first round was unsuccessful, but on our second attempt our Doctor told us that three embryos were viable and what did we want to do? Not knowing how many were going to develop into a baby, we chatted about the possibilities of having twins, triplets or more. Ideally we both wanted twins out of this and were lucky enough to have our dream come true.

With something as delicate and intimate as surrogacy, you have to have a team around you that you can trust whole heartedly and even more so have that trust with your surrogate. We grew to love our

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surrogate and even if we were not with her all the time, we knew that she was taking good care of our twins. She was a natural at it, and we couldn't have asked for a better match.

### **TAKING HOME THE TWINS**

In August 2008, after excitedly attending all the scans and doctors appointments with our surrogate, we welcomed our twin boys, Aiden and Austin, into the world. It had been a long 5 years of discussing, planning, saving and preparing, but finally we had got there, a milestone that changed our lives forever.

A lot of our friends have asked if we know which baby belongs to whom, and of course we have our suspicions from behaviour or facial expressions that Aiden and Austin have, but to be honest we have never wanted to do a DNA test, because in our eyes they are both ours equally. It really doesn't matter

to us who is genetically whose, they are both adorable and we love them to bits and nothing can ever change that.

Yes, it's sometimes scary to think that we are responsible of two little boys who, by the way, are growing up so fast. Every day brings a new set of challenges and experiences as a family which we love. We tried to do as much preparation for the transition from a regular couple to a family of four, but there is little that can really prepare you for the arrival of twins. It's been a learning process for all of four of us from the start but having our own family is such a blessing to us and we count our lucky stars every day. 

*Growing Generations is dedicated to building families through surrogacy, egg donation, and sperm donation. For more information please visit [www.growinggenerations.com](http://www.growinggenerations.com)*