

"Celebrating Our Lives"

UPSON

Woman

©
Winter 2010

First Best Christmas

Pink Ladies

GREEN GARDENING
at Still Meadows



And
Baby
makes
Three...

First Best Christmas ever

By Debbie Lord

Laurie Holmes, a loan officer at Colony Bank, and her husband Stephen, an assistant football coach and Special Education teacher at Upson-Lee, are successful, young and high spirited. The happy couple had it all except the one thing they wanted most, to have a baby. Stephen and Laurie Holmes tried for years and each month they had to face the same disappointing word, negative. They were referred to a fertility specialist. Laurie said, "We learned of several different options that could only increase our chance of conception by about seven percent -- pretty low odds for the high cost of each option."

Laurie and Stephen decided to pursue adoption in March 2008. "After trying on our own for such a long time, we decided neither one of us really wanted to put ourselves through the emotional and physical rollercoasters that would come with fertility treatments. We decided to adopt, and today, we can tell you it was the best decision we've made since we married in 2005," said Laurie.

"Our beautiful Anna Grace was born on January 26, and she is now nine months old," said Laurie. "Truly I forget that I didn't give birth to Anna Grace, she is our daughter in every way possible. Anna Grace's birth mom was 16 when was born. She is a very special girl, and Stephen and I commend her for putting the best interest of the child first and making the decision to give her baby up for adoption. She made the most important decision of Anna Grace's life to give birth to her, and because of her

decision Stephen and I have been given a whole new life...a life that only a parent can appreciate. We know there will be questions down the road and Anna Grace will need time to process that. We want her to understand the full love of adoption."

The adoption process was not an easy one, according to Laurie. "You have to open your heart and mind to see it isn't that the birth mothers and fathers don't want the child, because they do. They know they can't give their baby the life it deserves at that point in their lives; so they make the most selfless decision of all -- to give their child up for adoption. Stephen and I began the process through a private agency, however we ended up adopting privately. Both of our families and friends were there with us at the hospital when Anna Grace was born. Stephen and I actually had our own room and Anna Grace stayed with us from the very start.

"Adoption is an amazing leap of faith, because there is a period of time that the birth mother has to change her mind and there is nothing at all you can do. We brought Anna Grace home from the hospital when she was just 24 hours old. You could see the fear in the eyes of everyone around us at the hospital and when we came home. They were all so protective of Stephen and me, scared that Anna Grace's birth mom would change her mind. Stephen and I both will tell you with full confidence we knew this was the child God created just for us. Never once did the thought of losing Anna Grace cross



my mind."

When asked what it feels like to be a mother, Laurie said, "Being a mom is the best feeling I have ever had! I never knew I could love like this. You really never understand how much your parents love you until you become a parent yourself. I wanna do all I can to make her proud to call me "mama". To walk to her room in the morning and see that smile and giggle... to see her reach for me...priceless! Being a Mom changes everything. Being a mom gives you strength you never knew you had. Doesn't matter how tired you are, doesn't matter how sick you feel, you don't stop. Everything you do and say you think twice about. Life isn't about you anymore, it's about caring for your child. It is the most important job I will ever have, and one I wouldn't trade for the world. Through Anna Grace, I now have a deeper love and respect for my mom, dad and Granny. I have fallen in love with Stephen in a whole new way that wasn't there

before, to see him as a daddy. I can already tell I'm going to have to be the disciplinarian!"

Laurie continued, "We are getting ready to celebrate our first Christmas together. The birth of Anna Grace gives Christmas a whole new meaning for our family. This Christmas won't be so much about the tree, the lights, the gifts and the parties, it will be about the life given to us. A life I know was God's plan for us. We are honored that God chose us to be Anna Grace's parents.

"We definitely have plans for more children. We have already been in touch with the adoption agency about beginning the adoption process again in January."

Laurie wanted to pass on this advise to anyone considering adoption, "Go for it. It is emotional, as any journey can be, but one that is worth every bit of fear, joy, hopefulness and love you feel. Anna Grace is our daughter. She was created just for us, and adoption brought us together."