Journey to Parenthood
Organization Assists Couples Who Struggle With Infertility
Personal Stories Inspire Moms to Help Others With Infertility

Jennifer Conley and Colleen Brierly founded Journey to Parenthood to provide financial assistance and support.

by Jennifer Conley
Community contributor

My Husband and I battled with infertility for eight years. It started after our first loss at about 16 weeks back in 2001. It then continued to another pregnancy loss before we started additional testing. We went on to every infertility treatment there was and completed six failed in vitro fertilization treatments only to be diagnosed with “unexplained infertility.”

During that time we suffered an additional miscarriage. I tried acupuncture, Chinese herbs and mind body classes. After much thought and consideration, we decided that domestic adoption was the way we were going to start our family. We spent another year and half on that process only to be face with another failed attempt at building our family.

At that time my husband’s twin sister said “let’s do this, we can do this.” Soon, she became our gestational carrier and gave birth to our twins in March 2009.

When I completed my eight year journey, and my kids were about three, I started to think about what I wanted to do with my career.

I thought about what I was passionate about, the answer was simple — my journey to parenthood. I felt so blessed, but couldn’t help but think about all the people who struggle everyday with infertility issues. I wanted to do something to help others and make a difference.

That’s when I had the discussion with co-founder Colleen Brierley, who I have known most of my life and knew of her losses and battle with secondary infertility.

Colleen’s struggle with loss and secondary infertility led her to the adoption of three beautiful children. Although we had different journeys I knew she shared the passion with me. We soon embarked on the start of our nonprofit: Journey to Parenthood.

Facts and figures

Infertility is defined as a disease by the World Health Organization. It’s the inability to get or stay pregnant after one year of trying if you are under 35 or six months if you are older.

Every one in eight couples suffer from infertility, and according to the Center for Disease and Control, there are 6.7 million women in the U.S. with impaired ability to get pregnant or carry a baby to term.

With that said, all but 15 states are uninsured in the area of infertility. Even with those 15 states it does not guarantee full coverage.

There are obstacles such as who your employer uses for insurance coverage, or an employer that is self-insured, which doesn’t guarantee coverage. Maybe your company is based out of state in one where infertility is not covered at all.

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Jennifer Conley poses for a photo with her husband, Kenny, and her twins, Max and Mackenzie.

Photo courtesy of Jennifer Conley
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This then presents the financial burden for couples dealing with Infertility. Infertility treatments average costs range from $8,000 to $15,000 depending on clinics and medications needed. There is an option to perform genetic testing of embryos to lessen your chance of miscarriage, which can then add a few more thousand dollars to the cost.

If someone chooses the egg donor, that’s another $12,000, plus a few thousand for medications. Adoption can range from a couple thousand through foster care. A private adoption that may be domestic or international, which insurance does not cover, can cost up to $30,000 to $50,000. Although you may be entitled to tax credits which may apply. Then there is the costs of a gestational carrier/surrogate which can range from $25,000 (if someone you know is doing this for you at no cost) to more than $100,000.

Mission

Journey to Parenthood is a nonprofit that provides financial assistance and support for those battling infertility. Our main goal is to raise money to provide financial gifts to infertile couples who demonstrate a financial need in order to pursue infertility treatments, egg donor, surrogacy, adoption and more.

All applicants will be reviewed based on medical and financial need and be selected by our board of directors.

Another component to our mission is to help people with feelings of isolation, which is usually associated with individuals dealing with infertility.

Infertility can be a very private matter for many, and unfortunately it’s something people don’t talk about. Even in Hollywood, celebrities can talk openly about your addiction, failed marriage but not really infertility.

It’s a disservice to woman and couples dealing with it every day. Many people dealing with infertility hide it from their family and friends and many more don’t even tell their mothers.

We think it is important for people going through it to talk with others who understand it. When they do they will find that
they can deal with what they are going through in a much better state of mind, and share needed information amongst each other.

We have set up a social support group through meet-up, where woman can meet and talk with other woman who are dealing with the same issues.

We are trying to get this to be more active and get people involved, because it truly helps when you have someone to talk to that can relate to your situation. Just like any disease, it is important to speak out about it and support others. It makes you more resilient as an individual and gives hope to others.

Some journeys are longer than others, and everybody’s journey is different. No matter what your dream is, you need to hang in there to reach your dream. To anyone out there suffering — remember what’s important: determination, strength, hope and faith, along with support from others. You will eventually “win” and it will be so worth it.

Those would like to donate and make someone’s dream of parenthood a reality, can visit journeytoparenthood.org. For more information, find Journey to Parenthood on Facebook.

Jennifer Conley grew up in Norwood, and currently lives there with her husband, Kenny, and their two children, Max and Mackenzie.

Don’t Stop Believing

Journey to Parenthood founders plan an event to raise money for women struggling with infertility.

Gala for a good cause

The first ever “Don’t Stop Believing” Gala Event will be held on Nov. 1 at the Dedham Hilton, located at 25 Allied Drive, Dedham. We will be looking for raffle items as well as silent auction items. If you would like to donate something please reach out to us via email at jtp@journeytoparenthood.org. We would truly appreciate any donations for the cause.

Journey to Parenthood raises money to provide financial grants for those seeking infertility treatments, surrogacy or adoption. This money can lessen the financial burden that is too often associated with infertility. Anyone, as long as they are a U.S. citizen residing in the country and are being treated by a reproductive endocrinologist and infertility specialist in the U.S., can apply for a grant. They must be able to prove that they can provide a stable home environment for the child, while demonstrating that they are facing significant financial obstacles and need financial assistance with building their family.

For more information about Journey to Parenthood, visit journeytoparenthood.org, or find the organization on Facebook by searching “Journey to Parenthood.”

—Information provided by Jennifer Conley

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Colleen Brierley’s daughters, Elizabeth, left, and Caitlin, right, have fun for a photo.

Photo courtesy of Colleen Brierley