

A Family Affair

Mark P. Trolice, M.D., Helps Make Dreams Come True

By Jennifer Still



Andrea Trolice and Mark P. Trolice, M.D. (Photo by Kevin Colwell); the first scholarship recipients, Yadira Campis and Jamie Medina, were honored at last year's gala. On March 10, Campis gave birth to twins.

It's not about recognition. It's not about fame. It's not even about money.

For Mark P. Trolice, M.D., it's about family.

For years Dr. Trolice and his wife Andrea struggled with infertility. When everything failed, they decided to call it quits. Adoption, they had come to realize, was their last viable option. Despite some setbacks in the adoption process, the fertility specialist and his wife finally got their wish.

Now the couple has two children — 3 1/2-year-old Amelia and 7-month-old Alexander. "When I realized the joy of adoption that I hadn't even anticipated, the feeling was indescribable," Dr. Trolice remembers. "I can't believe these kids are under my skin the way they are. They have rashes from me kissing them so much."

But this is just the beginning of Dr. Trolice's story.

THE DREAM MAKER

Three years ago Dr. Trolice had a dream. His desire to do more for patients led to his greatest ambition — Fertile Dreams, "a non-profit organization dedicated to offering patients hope through education and access to resources."

A major component of Fertile Dreams is the Embracing Hope grant, a \$10,000-scholarship for infertile couples who establish financial need. What is unique about this grant, Dr. Trolice says, is its conditions. Recipients can use the money for an In-vitro Fertilization cycle at any fertility clinic in the country. And, what's more, Dr. Trolice contributes \$15,000 from his own pocket toward the grant and the Embracing Hope Gala, a black-tie fundraiser for Fertile Dreams.

"Medicine is healing the sick and relieving suffering," Dr. Trolice says. "Certainly that is what this [fertility medicine] is about, but it includes the additional component of adding life to the world for couples who have made proactive decisions to be parents — people who will be wonderful parents."

In addition to the Embracing Hope Grant, Fertile Dreams also promotes education and awareness through the Fertility Awareness Health Fair, where reproductive health experts answer questions on the latest advances in treatments. But even this is not enough, he says.

That's why he is determined to help lobby for health insurance providers to pay for fertility treatments — so determined Fertile Dreams has planned for a lobbyist to approach the Florida legislature.

OTHER OPTIONS

Because IVF does not work for everyone, Andrea steps in to offer support and guidance to those couples who still desperately want a family.

"When we were going through this ourselves, we felt there were no options laid out to us, at least in a positive way."

So she makes a point to detail the many options available to couples, such as surrogacy, egg donation, sperm donation, and adoption. "We are not going to just let you go if the fertility treatments don't work," she assures.

When a couple decides to try adoption, Andrea provides them with a wealth of invaluable information — information they may not find on their own, she says.

"I have a lot more to offer than an [adoption] agency because of my own experiences" she says. "The first thing I try to do is educate the couple on the process of adopting a child." She says when she and her husband first started the adoption process for themselves, they did not know what they were doing. "It took longer than it should have."

Part of educating patients is easing their fears, and since Andrea has first-hand experience with the adoption process, she knows what's going through a couple's mind.

"Most of our fears and concerns didn't come true, she says." When couples hear this, it helps alleviate some of their initial worries. "They see we are a family — not in the traditional way — but it's inspirational," she continues. "Once that baby is put in your arms, it's your baby. You feel like it's your child. It's amazing how God gave us that ability."

It's important to note, Andrea explains, that she is not part of a licensed agency and she doesn't take any money for her services. She is simply there to "help bring people to their final goal, which is to be parents. They can come over and see our family and realize it is another way — but not any less of a way."

Because of their own experiences with infertility and adoption, Dr. Trolice and Andrea say they won't stop trying to help others realize their dream.

"Fertility patients have their faces pressed up against the windows of families," Dr. Trolice says. "I wanted to do something to empower patients and let them know this [infertility] is not the dead end." **D**

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