

# The Egg Hunt: A Hopeful Alternative in the Search for Baby Love



BY JENNY ROUGH

In vitro fertilization. Surrogate parenting. Inter-uterine insemination. Adoption. With one in six couples lost in the emotional realm of infertility territory, alternative paths that bypass natural conception, yet still bring forth a baby, are expanding. Egg donation is one option that's becoming more popular for those who long to be parents but have not succeeded through other means. **Family Creations** — an agency that helps women conceive in this manner — is a Woodland Hills-based company that opened its doors in February 2006. Founded by two young women, Stephanie Goldman and Julia Alkire, the agency has seen its business boom this past spring.



the donor for her time and inconvenience (that fee might increase if prior donations have resulted in a successful pregnancy). There are physical and psychological costs as well, so Family Creations requires all donors to meet with a counselor to examine their feelings and the role they will play. Both parties also meet with an attorney and an endocrinologist. Goldman and Alkire facilitate all of these meetings.

"By the time they come to us, we hope couples have come to terms with what egg donation means," said Goldman. Many of them are seeking donor eggs as one more step on what's been a long, arduous quest for conception. "It's an exciting process, but there is definitely a lot of soul searching that needs to be done," Goldman advised.

Goldman and Alkire found themselves in this career path for different reasons. Goldman's mom and dad were never able to conceive (she and her siblings were adopted) and she's always wanted to help others like her parents. Alkire, who focuses on marketing for Family Creations, enjoys helping couples start families.

Despite varying concerns about egg donation, many women say they participate out of empathy they feel for couples with empty arms. One husband and wife Goldman worked with were previous clients from an old agency. A pregnancy was never achieved there, but the determined couple found Goldman online and started the process again with Family Creations. "We found them a new donor and prayed for a fresh start," said Goldman.

About three months ago, the good news came: after a six-year journey, the excited couple was pregnant. Bringing donors and parents together in that way, say Goldman and Alkire, is the most fulfilling part of their work. ♦

*For more information please contact Family Creations at 818.225.1700 or go to: [www.familycreations.net](http://www.familycreations.net)*



Family Creations partners Julia Alkire (l) and Stephanie Goldman

“Infertility affects people from every walk of life and Woodland Hills is no different,” Alkire said. Although most egg donation agencies in Los Angeles are located outside the Valley, Goldman and Alkire, both longtime valley residents, wanted would-be community parents to be able to step through Family Creations' doors and speak to an expert about this sensitive process face-to-face.

### BIG DECISIONS

Perhaps the most challenging part of the process is finding a suitable donor. Often prospective parents hope for specific genetic traits such as intelligence, appearance or similar ancestry. Although there are no guarantees, Family Creations strives to accommodate their clients' requests. Currently Family Creations has more than 150 available egg donors and the list is rapidly growing. Clients can browse through

available donor profiles, looking for someone with the characteristics they seek. Once a couple selects the donor, Family Creations coordinates the documents and acts as a liaison.

After a donor is selected by future parents, she receives a series of medications to send the ovaries into overdrive — often producing 10 or more eggs per cycle. Under anesthesia, the donor has her eggs suctioned through an ultrasound-guided needle and mixed with the sperm of the father-to-be in a Petri dish. Embryos form, and the fertilized eggs are transferred into the uterus of the woman trying to get pregnant. This way, the baby will share the father's genes and the mother will be able to carry her baby. The donor, who usually remains anonymous, relinquishes all rights to any offspring.

There are, of course, financial considerations. At Family Creations, hopeful parents can expect to spend at least \$13,000 from start to finish, \$6500 of which is paid to