



One of the four

Cheryl Clifford cuddles Heidi, one of the quadruplets she delivered Wednesday by Caesarian section at Akron City Hospital. Looking on is grandmother Gertrude Kuchta. The two boys and two girls, are "doing as well as can be expected for eight-week premies," said their father, Steve. However, Paul, the biggest of the babies, remains in serious condition at Akron Children's Hospital. The Cliffords live in Jackson Township and are United Church of Christ ministers.

Mark Rogers/INDE

Babies by the bunch!

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quadruplets were born Wednesday to a Jackson Township minister who received eggs for an in vitro fertilization procedure from her sister.

The babies' father was ecstatic.

"God is good," said the Rev. Steve Clifford, a minister of the United Church of Christ.

His wife, Cheryl, 48, also a minister and former pastor at St. John's United Church of Christ in Massillon, delivered quadruplets by Caesarian section Wednesday at Akron City Hospital. The babies, two boys and two girls, ranged from 2 pounds, 13 ounces to 3 pounds, 10 ounces.

Robert Steven, Ruth Marie and Heidi Lynn were doing well and could go home in several weeks.

Paul, the biggest at 3 pounds, 10 ounces, was taken to Akron Children's Hospital because his lungs were not fully developed. He was in serious condition today, the hospital said.

The babies were eight weeks premature. Clifford witnessed the births between 2 p.m. and 2:03 p.m. Wednesday and called them "incredible and fascinating — a miracle."

Cheryl Clifford's sister, Heidi Kuchta, 28, of New Hartford, Conn., donated the eggs that were fertilized with Steve Clifford's sperm and implanted in his wife's womb.

When they decided to have children, the Cliffords had difficulty conceiving.

"There was no diagnosed reason for infertility," said Steve Clifford, 41. "There was nothing obviously wrong, except that it's harder for older women to conceive."

Doctors told Mrs. Clifford that she would have a 3.5 percent chance of conceiving through in vitro fertilization if she donated the eggs, and a 20 percent chance if the donor was younger.

"As soon as he said that we looked at each other and said, 'Heidi,'" Clifford said.

"The way they presented it to me was that they wanted to ask me a favor," Kuchta said. "I wondered what kind of favor I could do for them since they are both ministers... At first I wondered if they were going to ask me to carry their child for them. Then they asked me to be a donor."

A few days later she called them with her decision.

"The way I thought of it, this would be some way for me to help somebody else have children," she said. Kuchta has a disorder that would not prevent her from getting pregnant but could keep her from carrying a fetus to term.

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