

# Quadruplets born to ministers

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AKRON — A husband-wife minister team have become parents to quadruplets, thanks to the wife's sister who donated eggs for an in vitro fertilization procedure.

The Rev. Cheryl Clifford, 48, a minister of the United Church of Christ, 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.

The father, the Rev. Steve Clifford, also a UCC minister, said he and his wife had thought one child would be a blessing.

"We never dreamed of four," said Clifford, 41.

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

The Cliffords, who live in Jackson Township and run a tax business in Canton that serves various churches and clergy, said they have received support from many congregations.

The couple married in July 1989 and originally did not plan to have children. When they did make the decision, they had difficulty conceiving.

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. "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 agreed to donate the eggs.

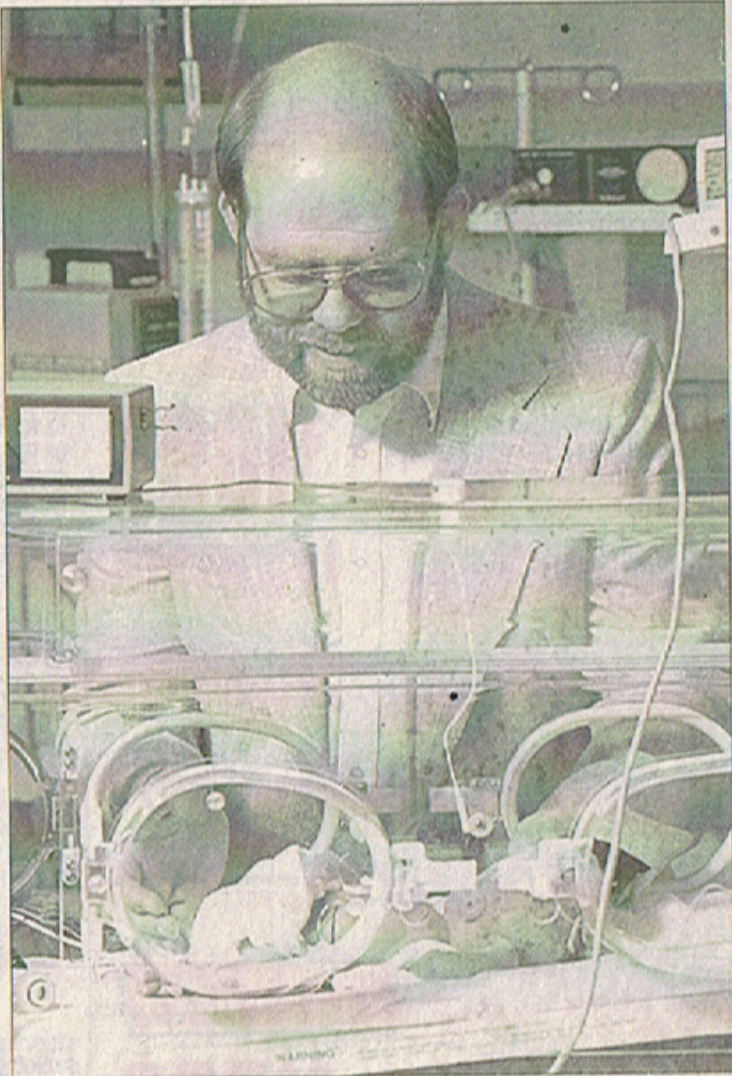
"The way I thought of it, this would be some way for me to help somebody else have children," she said.

Kuchta has a disorder that would not prevent her from getting pregnant but could keep her from carrying a fetus to term.

The eggs were implanted in Mrs. Clifford in March. For the past two and a half months, volunteers brought meals for her while she was on bed rest.

The babies were eight weeks premature. Robert Steven, Ruth Marie and Heidi Lynn are doing well and could go home in a few weeks.

Paul was taken to Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron. Doctors said the baby's lungs were not fully developed. He was in serious condition Thursday.



AP photo

The Rev. Steve Clifford reaches into an incubator to touch Ruth, one of four children born to him and his wife Cheryl, also a minister.