

Heartwarming stories for the Holiday Season...

The Joy of Adoption. The Miracle of Life.

by Kimberly Tyson

Hannah Strege is like most American teenagers. She likes to hang out with her friends. She listens to music and watches funny YouTube videos. She's planning where she will go to college and hopes to become a physician's assistant. She likes to eat pizza and go to movies. Yes, Hannah is an American girl.

Hannah's parents, Marlene and John Strege, are delighted to have their American girl! Back in the 90's, the Streges were wondering if they would ever have a girl or a boy as they faced the stresses of an infertility diagnosis. As they discussed treatment options with their physician. Since the advent of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), fertility clinics have been assisting patients achieve pregnancy through a treatment known as in vitro fertilization (IVF). Often, more embryos are created for the IVF treatment than are eventually used by the patient, thus creating a surplus of cryo-preserved embryos. Marlene asked her clinic if they had available embryos in frozen storage.

Marlene and John had already determined that they were not comfortable with creating more embryos through IVF, especially if it meant using donated human eggs. But this idea of using embryos that were waiting in frozen storage was intriguing. Marlene decided to seek out advice from life-long friend and experienced adop-



Fifteen year old Hannah Strege was adopted and born to her parents in 1998. Hannah is the first child born through the pioneer embryo adoption program called Snowflakes®.

tion attorney, Ron Stoddart and from several spiritual advisors, including Dr. James Dobson, to determine if using donated human embryos should be considered at all.

Simply being assigned anonymously donated embryos from a fertility clinic was not the procedure John and Marlene wanted to follow.

They worked with Mr. Stoddart to develop the first embryo adoption program in



Marley Jade was born on June 3, 2017 after being frozen as an embryo for nearly 18 years!

the world, now known as the Snowflakes® Embryo Adoption Program. The Streges and Stoddart decided to name the program Snowflakes because like a delicate snowflake each embryo is frozen, unique and a gift from God. The program was officially established in 1997 as a division of Nightlight® Christian Adoptions.

Using the best practices of adoption, the Snowflakes program helps couples who have completed their family select another couple to donate their remaining embryos to in order to give those embryos a chance to be born. Hannah is Snowflake baby #1! She was born on January 31, 1998 and placed into the wondrous and grateful arms of her parents.

Fast forward to June 3, 2017. On this day, baby Marley was born to her parents Marty and Elizabeth, a healthy 8lb, 1.3oz, 20.5" girl. While Hannah (Snowflake baby #1) was born in 1998, Marley's embryo was

created in a petri dish and frozen in 1998. She was born nearly 18 years later after her parents adopted her and gave birth to her. Marley is Snowflake baby #470.

Experiencing pregnancy and childbirth is the primary motivation of most families who choose embryo adoption over other forms of adoption. It's also an economical alternative, often costing much less than IVF or the domestic adoption of an infant. There are over 1,000,000 embryos in frozen storage in the U.S.; not all will be donated for reproduction, but Snowflakes provides potential donors with a life-giving choice for their remaining embryos.

The Snowflakes program is managed right here in Loveland, CO, serving clients throughout the country and the world. In 2017, Snowflakes will celebrate its 20th anniversary and the birth of the 500th Snowflake baby! 📌