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## In Her Own Words

### An Embryo Recipient Story

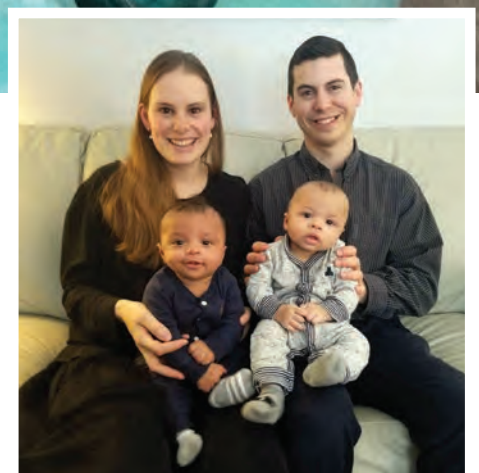
We are so thankful for the gift of embryo donation. It has changed our lives forever. Through the miracle of receiving donated embryos, we now have our precious sons, Wynsten and Elias. We are so grateful to have the opportunity to be their parents. It truly is a dream come true.

Five years ago, when we got married and started trying to grow our family, we had no idea what lay ahead for us. We never could have imagined a more perfect outcome than having these two beautiful boys to raise, but the journey wasn't always easy. Shortly after our first wedding anniversary,

I was diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Failure. This meant that the chances of us getting pregnant spontaneously were extremely low. The diagnosis was a difficult reality to face. Although we had always dreamed of one day adopting, we just hadn't envisioned the timing being quite as it seemed it would be.

One day, while searching YouTube for information on adoption, I came across a video showing a family who were embryo recipients and gave birth to triplets. It was an incredible story, and we were very intrigued. We prayed that God would

*At right:  
Peter, Annemarie,  
Wynsten and Elias*



show us if this was something we should pursue. A few months later, we had the opportunity to meet a baby born through the Beginnings embryo donation/recipient program. This solidified in our hearts our desire to grow our family through this unique and amazing means.

*...continued on page 3*



## A Message *from the* Executive Director Amanda Baigent



*“ Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew,  
like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. ”*

*- Deuteronomy 32:2*

### **All things change... mind, feelings, bodies, relationships. Transformation is constant.**

The end of one cycle is the Beginning of another.

While change is inevitable, it is definitely not easy. Beginnings began with the dream of four people who stepped out in faith, with love and hope in their hearts. Because of their vision, Beginnings has been able to support expectant parents and adoptive families across the province for over 30 years and our embryo donation program has been offering services nation-wide for over a decade. Beginnings has grown and changed in ways we could not have imagined but the goal has remained the same, to demonstrate love and compassion by supporting families.

Beginnings continues to work hard to meet the changing needs of clients and communities.

Without our loyal and generous donors, we would not be able to provide the compassionate and professional services that we do. Beginnings continues to thrive throughout the COVID 19 pandemic and our Adoption and Embryo

Donation Programs provide a needed service to many.

Throughout the past year we have engaged in a Strategic Planning process that has given us new vision and hope for the future. Beginnings made the difficult decision to refocus our work and as part of that change our Guelph Care centre closed in December 2021. Beginnings remains committed to offering free counselling services and pregnancy and parenting support for all expectant parents in crisis across Ontario. We work cooperatively with other social services agencies to ensure that everyone has access to the services that they need. For those who have supported the Guelph Centre, from staff to volunteers, to churches, to businesses and organizations, the difference you have made is immeasurable and we are truly grateful. Beginnings will continue to offer free counselling services and pregnancy and parenting support for all expectant parents in crisis across Ontario. We work cooperatively with other social services agencies to ensure that everyone has access to the services that they need.

Beginnings Hamilton has another

busy year with adoptions and I am so pleased to have heard from many of you about the Christmas newsletter and all the family photos that were shared. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to help connect so many birth and adoptive families as well as to provide support for many expectant parents. In 2021, we placed 30 babies for adoption with open relationships with their birth families.

Our Embryo Donation/Recipient Program continues to thrive and we are so proud to announce that we currently have 10 pregnancies thus far in 2022. Please note that many of these now expectant families were once on our wait list, hoping to adopt a child and seized the opportunity to join our Embryo Program.

As we move into spring, we look forward to seeing the flowers bloom and the sun shine and we are reminded of the innocence and beauty that exists in this world and that there is new life all around us. I wish Easter Blessings to all and a Happy Mother's Day!

*Amanda*

## (cont'd)... In Her Own Words



*Peter and Annemarie awaiting their sons' birth.*



*Annemarie with Wynsten and Elias.*



*Wynsten and Elias*

After completing the required paperwork and screening process with Beginnings, we excitedly put together our profile book and were thrilled to be presented with a number of different profiles. We considered all the profiles and felt drawn to two donors. We selected one and we were overjoyed when we received news that we had successfully been matched!

Our first match was of a group of 10 embryos that had been frozen for 24 years. We did get pregnant three times, but sadly none of those precious lives made it to our arms. That was a very challenging time. It was hard to not be discouraged, but we knew God had a plan in all of this. As a result of this experience, we learned to deeply appreciate how valuable each life is. There were times of great sorrow and depression, but we still had hope.

After taking time to grieve, we contacted Mary to ask if we could try again. It certainly was not easy to open our hearts again, since knowing the reality of loss all too clearly. We were amazed to find out that after over a year, the second profile we had considered the first time was still available! We will forever be so thankful to the

beautiful family that allowed us to have the opportunity to give these babies a home. We received six special embryos, frozen for 15 years. On the day of the transfer, our doctor met with us to discuss the current embryo report after our embryos had been thawed and grown in the lab for two days. The news was not as good as we had hoped: two of our embryos had not survived the thaw; two were still at day 3 development (2 days behind); and two had made it to the morula stage but on the day of transfer should have been blastocysts. Due to the delay in development and grading of our embryos, the doctor recommended we transfer both morula embryos as our chances of pregnancy were quite low. We prayed for the future of these babies, but it certainly was not easy. Five days later, I took a test and, to my amazement, two pink lines appeared!! We were thrilled, God had answered our prayers!

After our history of loss, it was hard to not worry, and at six weeks, I had a terrible scare while at work. We thought the pregnancy may be over but prayed for a miracle. A couple of days later, I went in for my first ultrasound and got the biggest shock of my life. Not one

but TWO heartbeats appeared on the screen. We just about passed out with the utter joy and surprise we felt in that moment!

Pregnancy was amazing. Of course it came with its challenges, but to have the opportunity to grow my babies in my womb was incredible. I loved feeling them kick and respond to our voices as we would sing them "Jesus Loves Me". What a privilege to be able to carry and grow my children and to experience the beauty and magic of childbirth.

Our miracle twin boys are now five months old and learning and growing bigger with each day. We are forever grateful to our donor family, who have been so supportive from the beginning. They are encouraging and caring in any way we need. They are open to being as involved as we are comfortable. It is so nice to have a family with similar values to us. We want our children to have the opportunity to meet and learn about their genetic siblings and we believe having an open relationship will be very important for our children's development so that they can know they have always been loved from the very beginning of their journey.

# Thank You for Your Support in 2021!

To all our donors, thank YOU for making our work possible. With your support, we were able to provide the following in 2021:

## At Our Hamilton Office

- We received inquiries from 95 expectant or new parents looking for adoption and parenting support
- We worked with 40 mothers and 15 fathers to make decisions regarding their pregnancy and parenting plans
- We placed 30 children for adoption
- We provided foster care for 28 children over a span of 404 days
- We received 486 inquiries from prospective adoptive families
- We received 357 inquiries about our embryo donation program
- We welcomed 10 babies through our embryo donation program



## A Loving Memorial Gift to Beginnings

In December 2021, Gerben Dykema, a loving member of the Beginnings' family, passed away.

Jane and Gerben Dykema were one of the first families to adopt their daughter Amber through Beginnings, over 35 years ago and have been faithful supporters ever since.

In expression of sympathy, family and friends have donated a total of \$3,555 to Beginnings Family Services, in honour of Gerben.

We are so grateful for this gift which will provide support to women and families in crisis through counselling and foster care services.

*If you would like more information on how to make a donation in honour or in memory of a loved one, please give the office a call.*



*From 1985, the year Beginnings received our adoption license.*



**beginnings**  
FAMILY SERVICES

1 Young Street, Suite 520  
Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8

Phone: 905-528-6665  
Email: [info@beginnings.ca](mailto:info@beginnings.ca)  
Website: [www.beginnings.ca](http://www.beginnings.ca)

Beginnings Care Centre  
Woodstock 519-421-2127

# Beginnings Info

## Executive Director:

Amanda Baigent, MSW, RSW

## Director of Administration:

Megan Dunlop-Elms, BA

## Director of Finance:

Aideen Hennessy, CPA, CGA

## Embryo Donation Coordinator:

Mary Howlett-Nero, MSW, RSW

## Clinical Assistant:

Kim Wachta, BA, MLS

## Administrative Assistant / Donor

## Relations:

Madeline Slump, BA

## Embryo Donation Program

## Assistant:

Julia Milmine, MScEd, OCT, RSW

## Birth Parent Counsellors:

Bonnie Archer, BSc, RN

Bethany Vidican, BSW

Connie Barrett, BASoc, SSW

Vanessa Crozier, BSW, RSW

## Board of Directors

Bryan Herechuk

Ann Stocker

Diane Vanderwoude

Adrian Stulp

## OUR MISSION:

In the conviction that life is a gift from God, Beginnings provides services related to pregnancy, parenting and adoption.



### Romans 6:5-6:

*“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.”*

## AGM

**Our Annual General Meeting will be held on May 10th, 2022**

## Monthly Donor



Please consider becoming a monthly donor in providing pregnancy support and counselling for young moms via our website at [www.beginnings.ca](http://www.beginnings.ca) or by contacting us at **905-528-6665**.

## Let's Keep in Touch!

Make sure to 'Like' **Beginnings Family Services** and **Beginnings Family Services Embryo Donation** on Facebook and to 'Follow' us on Twitter and Instagram!

Interested in receiving this newsletter and communications email?



Please send your email address to [info@beginnings.ca](mailto:info@beginnings.ca) so you never miss an update!



## I want to help Beginnings build strong families!

Your Name & address (if different than on reverse):

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_



Head Office: 1 Young Street, Suite 520, Hamilton, ON L8N 1T8  
Pregnancy Care Centres in Woodstock

1-877-528-6665

[info@beginnings.ca](mailto:info@beginnings.ca)

[www.beginnings.ca](http://www.beginnings.ca)

Yes, I can donate monthly:

\$100/mo  \$50/mo  \$25/mo \$ \_\_\_\_\_ /mo

Please supply your credit card or provide a void cheque.  
A void cheque is preferred to reduce service fees.

I would like to make the following donation:

\$1,000  \$500  \$250  \$100  \$50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I have remembered Beginnings Family Services in my will.

I would like more information on how to include Beginnings in my will.

Please complete for credit card payment:

VISA  Mastercard Expiry \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Digit CVV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to Beginnings Family Services. Gifts of \$20 or more will be receipted.  
CCRA Charitable Reg. No. 11880 2388 RR0001

Thank you!

To donate online, visit [www.beginnings.ca](http://www.beginnings.ca) and select Donate