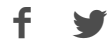


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A Mother's Day story: Two women and the baby they made together

PARENTING By [Nicole Villalpando](#) - American-Statesman Staff

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Highlights

A gestational carrier helps in cases where pregnancy is not possible or would be dangerous for the mother.

Using a gestational carrier, which some think of as a surrogate, involves a legal contract and counseling.

The look of sheer joy is all over the face of Oliver Overton's mom as he came into the world at 12:02 p.m. on March 21.


"It was like being in a dream," Austinite Kim Overton says. "It was amazing. He was beautiful and he was crying."

She held him close on her bare chest, and her husband, Jason Duncan, cut the cord.

Oliver was three years in the making and would not have happened without the unwavering commitment of Overton's cousin Cydnee Black, who became his gestational carrier.

"She did such a great job," Overton says. "It was an amazing experience."

Overton, who owns fitness accessory company SPIbelt, wrote about her journey to have Oliver through a gestational carrier in her blog, [kimjoverton.com](#). The story of Oliver's birth got shared through Facebook and



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RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL

Dillon Overton, 5, help feeds his 6-week-old brother, Oliver, at their home.

reached more than 100,000 people.

Second time isn't easier

Overton, 45, knew from the time she was 34 that pregnancy would be a challenge, but not impossible. That was when doctors discovered she had fibroid tumors. She had 11 removed for her 35th birthday. Dr. Thomas Vaughn

at Texas Fertility Center warned her that if she decided to have kids, she should do it within five years because of the growth rate of those tumors.



RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL

Jason Duncan and his wife Kim Overton hold their 6-week-old son Oliver at their home on Tuesday.

Overton waited, but when love didn't come into the picture, she decided to become what she calls a "solo starter." Through a sperm donor, she got pregnant with son Dillon, who is now 5.

About a year after Dillon was born, Overton had another 12 tumors removed. She decided to start trying to have a second child when Dillon was 2.

She thought it would be like her first pregnancy — relatively easy except for six months of nausea, and then birth by Cesarean section because of the tumors.



RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL

Dillon Overton, 5, help feed his 6-week-old brother Oliver as his mother Kim Overton, father Jason Duncan, and his other brother ... [Read More](#)

She planned for another baby. She talked to Dillon about becoming a big brother. He even picked out toys to give his future sibling.

After a year and a half of trying and trying with fertility support including intrauterine insemination, Overton wasn't pregnant. She then did another year and a half of in vitro fertilization, but she still wasn't pregnant.

Finding a new path

About the Author



NICOLE VILLALPANDO Nicole Villalpando writes about families for the Austin American-Statesman.



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Kim Overton had her second son, Oliver, using her cousin Cydnee Black as a gestational carrier. Dr. Stephanie Reich attended while ... [Read More](#)

Devastated when the pregnancy didn't happen, she found solace in her cousin Ericka Holmes. "She was a big supporter at the time," Overton says. She remembers telling Holmes that what she really needed was a new uterus.

Holmes suggested approaching her daughter, Cydnee Black, who had two children, who are now 2 and 4. In fact, Holmes was the

one who asked Black.

"I didn't have to think about it," Black, 27, says. She says she just has a maternal, nurturing heart. "I knew it was going to be a process, but I was ready for it anyways."



After the birth, Kim Overton kisses husband, Jason Duncan, while she holds Oliver on her chest. Their boys, Atticus, 4, and ... [Read More](#)

Overton says it was uncomfortable asking, but "our family is very loving, very giving."

Once Black decided to do it, she got boyfriend Je'UAN Smith on board. "He was so supportive," she says.

Preparing for pregnancy

It becomes a legal transaction when more than a mother and father are involved. Overton had to get a lawyer that specializes in pregnancy through gestational carrier. They drew up legal documents that outlined their rights.

Vaughn says that while many people call gestational carriers surrogates, that's not the right term, and true surrogacy is illegal in Texas.

The difference is that a

gestational carrier does not use her own egg in making the baby. With a gestational carrier, the egg is either the legal mother's egg or a donor egg. The sperm is either the legal father's sperm or donor sperm. Texas law also requires the carrier already to have carried her own child to term.



Kim Overton hugs her gestational carrier and cousin Cydnee Black after the birth of Oliver.

Using a gestational carrier often becomes an option for a woman who has had a hysterectomy or was born without a uterus or has another medical reason that makes her uterus inhospitable or could make pregnancy dangerous for her. Vaughn says Texas Fertility Center is implanting embryos in gestational carriers 10 to 15 times a year.

Gestational carriers are sometimes family, like in this case, and **sometimes found through a matchmaking service**. When it's not family, gestational carriers can cost \$80,000 to \$95,000, Vaughn says. "You're employing a woman to work for you for at least nine months," he says.

Overton and Black won't disclose the terms of their agreement, but Overton paid for all the expenses, from conception to birth, and tried to help Black in any way should could. "I'm here for her for the rest of her life," Overton says. "She knows that without me having to say anything."

Once the legal documents were drawn up, Overton and Black had to go through psychological counseling to make sure that Black could handle giving up the baby and that they had discussed everything, from the pregnancy and Black's future involvement to who could post what on Facebook. "They uncovered every stone," Overton says. "We were very much on the same page."

Ready for conception

Once they were approved, Overton took medication to stimulate egg growth, which meant 10 to 11 days of injections. Vaughn then removed Overton's eggs while Overton was under anesthesia. Usually women leave the surgical unit feeling a little crampy.

In the lab, the eggs met the donor sperm, then the technicians waited to see what happened.

For Black's part, she had to first take birth control pills to essentially put the ovaries to sleep. Once the embryo was ready to be implanted, it was thawed and then placed into the top of Black's uterus by catheter. Vaughn likens it to having a pap smear done. Overton got to be in the room and watch the ultrasound of the catheter going into the Black's uterus.

Black and Overton didn't find success the first time. In fact, the first two times, when Black took a pregnancy test nine days after the embryo was placed it was negative.

The third time it was positive, but it didn't last. "It was devastating," Overton says.

When she called Black to see how she was doing, Black immediately asked her if she wanted to do it again. "Are you kidding me?" Overton says. "I'm so exhausted and emotionally a wreck, but she said, 'I'm here; I'm ready.'"

Black says she didn't want to give up. "My whole purpose was we were going to try to have this baby."

The next time, Vaughn removed 17 eggs from Overton; 13 fertilized and eight continued to grow. Then the eggs were tested to see if they would be viable. Only one was, and that was the one implanted into Black.

Those numbers might sound depressing, but Vaughn says that most women at 44, which was what Overton was at the time, don't make that many eggs. The chance of having a baby at 44 is probably 5 percent, Vaughn says, but if he can get an embryo that is genetically normal, the chance goes up to between 40 percent and 50 percent.

Once the embryo was implanted, Black then had to take progesterone and estrogen for the first 10 weeks of the pregnancy until her body would naturally take over making hormones.

This time it worked. By July, Black was pregnant with Oliver.

Ready for a life change

The month before, Overton met Jason Duncan, 47, and things got serious. She had to explain to him that she was in the middle of the gestational carrier process. Like Overton, he had one son and said he had always wanted a second. "He was very, very positive about it," she says. "We fell in love after that."

Duncan and Overton eloped to Hawaii in December with their two boys in tow.

Meanwhile, Oliver was growing inside Black. The first trimester was filled with the roller coaster of having the artificial hormones and her own natural hormones beginning to take over. At one point, she got shaky, but was reassured it was all normal.

Overton often texted Black to see how she was doing, and she and Duncan attended Black's doctor appointments. Black sent her pictures and even recorded videos of the baby moving, when she finally could capture that.

For Black, she never felt like this was her own baby, she says. "I'm baby-sitting for nine months; that's how I looked at it," she says.

For Overton, even though Oliver wasn't inside her, he was on her mind. And even though there wasn't a physical reason to wake up at 3 a.m., sometimes she did, and she would wonder if Black was up as well. Then she would text her to see how she was doing.

As the baby grew, Black told her daughters, Jordyn, 4, and Jailynn, 2, that it was their cousin inside her belly and eventually it became that it was Kim's Baby Oliver.

On the other side of Austin, Overton was telling Dillon that "Mommy's tummy is broken" and that Black was carrying his brother in her tummy.

"It's easy for kids," Overton says.

Other people took more explaining. Black told her office that yes, she was having a baby, but it wasn't hers, and Overton told her staff that yes, she was having a baby, but she wasn't carrying it. After he was born, people Overton met at Dillon's school would be confused about where that baby came from, or they would say how great she looked after having the baby. Sometimes she just says, "Thank you." Other times, she explains.

Meeting Oliver

Unlike Black's other two pregnancies, this one came with preeclampsia. At 37 weeks, Black was induced. Black's mom filmed the birth and her boyfriend was there to support her. Overton and Duncan were in the room as well as her mother and her son. Duncan's son Atticus and Black's daughters would come later.

Black pushed four times and six hours after labor started, Oliver came into the world and immediately went on Overton's chest.

Overton says her attachment to Oliver didn't feel any different than the one she had with Dillon, who grew in her uterus. "I loved him the time he was conceived, just as much as Dillon," she says. "I felt very connected."

What was different than with Dillon was that instead of just worrying about the baby during the birth, she was worrying about Black. "I was thinking of her first," Overton says. "All I was thinking was that I was so proud of her and concern for her health and the baby's."

The hospital staff had previously been prepared with who Oliver's parents were and who Oliver's gestational carrier and family were. Overton had a room next to Black's and Oliver went back and forth. Initially, Black pumped or nursed Oliver to get him the colostrum. And Black continued to pump or nurse him when she visited after they all went home, but, without the baby, her supply didn't stay. Instead, Overton gives Oliver donor milk.

Life with Oliver

Overton's family is settling into life with a new baby. She is more rested than with Dillon, in part because she didn't have the physical exhaustion that comes with pregnancy or birth, and in part because Duncan shares the parenting.

"Our house is like a circus," she says. "We don't have a girl, we have three boys." They haven't ruled out future children, either, and they like the idea of adoption.

"For now, we're focusing on Oliver."

Black had six weeks of leave to recover from the birth and will be starting school for a business degree in the fall. The experience gave her such a sense of accomplishment.

"Seeing him go to her, that made my life," Black says. "It meant the world to

me. It's a huge accomplishment. We did it.”

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