

Three of a kind

Farmington Hills family have a full house with babies

By PAUL HURSCHEMANN
STAFF WRITER

Three-of-a-kind adds up to a full house for several area families who have recently welcomed triplets into their households.

Canton residents Carole and Jim Kody hosted a party Sept. 12 for a group of new-found friends who all share the unusual responsibility of raising infant triplets.

The group of seven families, with triplets ranging in age from the 4-month-old Lindblooms to the 15-month-old Kody's, gathered to allow all the fathers to get together with the moms and kids for the first time.

"We (the moms) all meet once a month for lunch," said Lisa Lindbloom. "And all of the dads have met one another, but this was an opportunity for all of them to get together with all of us for the first time."

Well, almost. Rene and Scott Baker didn't make it because their kids were a bit under the weather. Julie and Neil Fessel decided to leave before the Lindblooms arrived because their 5 1/2-month-olds, Brandon, Tyler and Devon, were getting a little uneasy, according to Carole Kody.

Those who did make it, joining the Kody's 15-month-olds Elizabeth, Philip and John, were: the Lindblooms and their 4-month-old trio of Kyle, Abigail and Emily; Fran and Gary Nayh of Northville and their 7-month-old daughters, Britany, Brianna and Beatrice, (though they left their older son, Bobby, 5, with a sitter); Lesley and Ace Merlino of Farmington Hills and their 6-month-olds Maxx, Morgan and Joey; and Susan and John Gannon of Livonia and their 8-month-olds Gregory, Natalie and Madeline.

The moms and dads enjoyed pizza, cookies, spinach dip and other nibbles, while the kids, or well, the kids mostly slept. Although the three Kody kids did enjoy some of the pizza and other treats before retiring for their afternoon naps.

"We all met through Oakwood Hospital and a group of doctors who suggested we contact one another since we shared similar circumstances," explained Carole Kody, describing how the group formed. "I was asked if I would mind helping Lisa and Lesley through their pregnancies, since I had already gone through what they were going through. I was happy to offer whatever assistance I could."

Most of the moms were hospitalized at some point during their pregnancies, which led them to meet one another, and that led to their current informal group.

"Most people don't realize that a woman who is pregnant with triplets does not experience a pregnancy in the same way as a woman who is having a single baby, or even twins," said Kody.

"Most people don't realize the complications with triplets," said Lisa Lindbloom. "None of us had full-term pregnancies. Premature labor is the main problem. We were all on some kind of medication at one time or another to help prevent that."

Even so, none of the women completed their full terms. The Gannon triplets, who arrived in just 29 weeks, were the earliest and spent two months in the hospital before coming home. The Lindbloom triplets were nearly full-term at 35 weeks and were the only children among this group who did not remain in the hospital post-partum, coming home with Lisa a couple of days after birth.

So, how have three new babies affected these young families?

"We don't need an alarm clock anymore," said Jim Kody. "We used to sleep in until 10 a.m. on



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HURSCHEMANN

Babies galore: Present at the recent get-together of the families with triplets include the Nayh family of Northville, Gary holds Britany, Fran holds Brianna and Beatrice; from left, the Merlino family of Farmington Hills, Ace holds Maxx, Lesley holds Morgan and Joey; the Kody family of Canton, Jim holds Elizabeth, Carole holds Philip and John; the Gannon family of Livonia, John holds Gregory, Susan holds Natalie and Madeline; and the Lindbloom family of Canton, Brian holds Kyle, Lisa holds Abigail and Emily.

weekends. Now, we're up at 6:30 a.m. every day."

"I love going to work on Monday morning," joked Ace Merlino. "I seem to be the only one smiling at work on Monday mornings. I don't get it."

"Most of us were dual-income families," added Susan Gannon. "Now, most of us have given up one income and our expenses have increased."

And, how is having three new babies different from having just one new bundle of joy?

"You can't play 'man-to-man,' it's got to be 'zone coverage' parenting," joked Gary Nayh.

"Parents with one child, or even those with twins, don't understand what it's like for us," added Carole Kody. "There is always one more child than you have hands for."

The parents say they think of their children as individuals, not trios.

"They're not identical and they are so different," said Carole Kody. "Even since birth. They each have their own personality, so we don't dress them the same. Except, perhaps, when we go to an amusement park - so we can keep an eye on them more easily."

"I don't like people calling them triplets," said Lesley Merlino. "They're individuals. My sister-in-law is always calling them 'the triplets.' Like, she'll call and ask, 'How are the triplets?' What are the triplets up to? They are three individuals, not a single unit."

"It's hard to go out in public," said Lisa Lindbloom. "We get swarmed all the time."

"People ask a lot of stupid questions," said Fran

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Alice Merlino

—Mother of Farmington Hills triplets

Nayh, a comment with which all of the other parents quickly agreed.

For example:

"Are they triplets?"

"Are they all yours?"

"Were they all born on the same day?"

"Or, sometimes you'll get some really stupid ones," added Susan Gannon, "like, we've got two girls and a boy and people will ask, 'Are they identical?' or, 'Are they twins?'"

"My favorite," added Lisa Lindbloom, "was this little old lady who asked, 'Did you have to do it three times in the same night?'"

Of course, there some rude and invasive questions, too.

"One of the most frustrating things is people's comments," said Carole Kody. "I can't believe all of the people who ask if we used fertility drugs. Like it's any of their business if we did or didn't. People can be so rude!"

"People will say, 'Ooh, I feel so sorry for you,'" she

added. "It's ridiculous. Or, they'll say, 'You must not get any sleep,' or, 'I'm glad it's you, not me.'"

"Yeah, I'm glad it's not you, too," sneered Ace Merlino, in reference to those who make such comments. "If they have that kind of attitude, yeah, thank God it is us and not them!"

"But, then you get some nice comments, too," said Carole Kody. "One lady said, 'God must have known you could handle them.'"

Coping with three new babies at the same time isn't easy, the parents said.

"It takes a really good partner to do this," said Lisa Lindbloom. "All of the husbands are really, really involved."

"I was gone on vacation for two weeks," explained Ace Merlino. "And my wife is the biggest angel in the world. I don't know how she does it. I couldn't do it."

"It takes teamwork between the parents," said Lesley Merlino. "I've got the best husband in the world. He is so good with the kids."

All of the parents agreed that having three babies brought major changes to their lives. But, they all agreed that they would do it over again.

"Even if I knew beforehand that I was going to have triplets, I would definitely do it over again," said Susan Gannon. "I wouldn't trade the experience for the world."

If you have triplets, or are pregnant with triplets, and would be interested in meeting these families call Carole Kody, (734) 416-0914. Group members are also seeking anyone with hand-me-downs.

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