

THE RECORD

Winning essay leads to a dream fulfilled

Kathryn Caggianelli
The Record

AVERILL PARK — Amy and Steven Hughes didn't put up a Christmas tree last year.

The Dutchess County natives had just moved into a new home in Averill Park last December but hadn't felt much like celebrating. Just a few days after Thanksgiving 2005, Amy had suffered a miscarriage.

The 30-year-old substitute teacher had unsuccessfully tried to conceive a child with her husband for several years. Then, after finally becoming pregnant, she had to endure the heartbreak of losing the baby after 11 weeks.

But this year things are much different.

Albany IVF awards couples with free in-vitro services through regional contest

legs during a recent check-up.

"I'm overwhelmed, excited, happy, speechless," Amy said.

The holiday decorations are up and their spirits are soaring. They credit their good fortune to a successful round of in vitro-fertilization that was made possible by Albany IVF, Fertility and Gynecology, PLLC on Northern Boulevard.

The Hughes and two other couples — Naeela Marrero and Hernan Figueroa of Clifton Park and Brenda and Dan Fairbanks of Hudson Falls — won an in vitro session after entering a Gifted Essay competition last summer sponsored by Albany IVF.

Statistics favored success for only one of the three women but the unexpected happened. Hughes and Fairbanks became pregnant after the first try. And when Marrero arrived for her initial consultation, tests revealed she was already

"We're delighted that these wonderful couples will have the opportunity to finally experience the joys of parenthood."

Dr. Peter M. Horvath
founder and director of Albany IVF

pregnant.

"We're delighted that these wonderful couples will have the opportunity to finally experience the joys of parenthood. ... We wanted to provide these deserving families with access to a medical technology they might otherwise not have been able to afford," said physician Peter M. Horvath, founder and director of Albany IVF.

Horvath and his team enjoy a 43 percent success rate of helping clients get pregnant. They launched the essay program in 2003 as a way to give back to the community, he said.

Estimated cost of the program is \$6,000 to \$7,000 for most patients and an additional \$1,500 to \$2,000 in related drug costs.

For Amy, the waiting and the uncertainty have been the hardest part.

"I was very hopeful it was going to work, but after so many times of trying and failing, I didn't have high expectations," she said.

This was the first time she and her husband had tried in vitro fertilization. Though Amy had never been diagnosed with Diminished Ovarian Reserve — a condition that causes the body to produce fewer eggs than it should — that was the likely explanation for her inability to become pregnant. Doctors had no explanation for why she miscarried.

Side effects associated with the related drug therapy include moodiness, bloating, and abdominal cramping. Amy's ovaries became hyper-stimulated and swelled to almost twice their size. She experienced pain from the swelling but weathered the physical and emotional demands from the drugs



Tom Killips —
The Record

Amy Hughes sits in front of the Christmas tree in her Averill Park home last week. Hughes, who suffered a miscarriage just before Christmas last year, is pregnant, thankful and happy.

without complaint.

The side effects were a small price to pay for a baby, Hughes said.

"We had four eggs fertilized and chose to transfer three into my uterus," she said.

The remaining egg was frozen for future use but sadly didn't survive the process.

Hughes learned she was pregnant Oct. 20, or within two weeks after her fertilized eggs were implanted.

"Christmas is a holiday for children. We've been looking at all of our catalogues and at all the tiny clothes in the stores. We're so excited," Hughes said.

Hughes admitted harboring some fear about the baby surviving the full term of

her pregnancy. She is still receiving injections to support the fetus. Hearing its heartbeat and seeing it move on Ultrasound, however, have offered her reassurance, too.

"We'll be nervous right up until I have the baby in my arms."

In her winning essay, Hughes mentioned how effortlessly children turn the mundane into the magical.

"In the spring, rain showers become opportunities for puddle jumping, and thunderstorms provide the ideal backdrop for cuddling on a porch swing and making up stories," she wrote.

If all goes well, she will be sitting on the porch swing making memories with her newborn later this spring.