

Local News

BREAK THE FAST

■ **SOCIAL GATHERING:** The Northeast Jewish Singles will "break the fast" at 8 p.m. Oct. 2 at the home of a member in Schenectady. A dairy supper and socializing will be the highlights of the evening. The cost

is \$5 for members and \$8 for non-members. For reservations, directions and information, call Vera Gangel at 393-6538 by Sept. 28.

Wanna-be parents win 'write' to try

Kathryn Caggianelli
The Record

AVERILL PARK — For as long as Amy Hughes can remember, she has wanted to become a mother, but the joy of having a child of her own has eluded her.

Though Hughes hasn't officially been diagnosed with Diminished Ovarian Reserve — a condition that causes the body to produce fewer eggs than it should — it is one of the challenges she faces when she tries to get pregnant.

Now, thanks to an essay competition sponsored by Albany IVF, Fertility & Gynecology, PLLC on Northern Boulevard, the 30-year-old substitute teacher and her husband Steven are being offered a complimentary cycle of in vitro fertilization treatments to help them beat the odds.

Albany IVF has a 43 percent success rate helping clients get pregnant, said Dr. Peter Horvath, founder and director of Albany IVF.

Horvath and his team offered a similar Gifted Essay program in 2003 that resulted in the birth of twins to Brenda and Steve Hathaway of Hoosick Falls. At that time, there were as

Excerpt from the essay by Amy Hughes:

"Children can turn the mundane into the magical; being a parent enables one to take part in that magic. 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. Hazy summer afternoons are vastly improved by swing sets and silly chases through the sprinkler, while evenings transform the lawn into a wonderland of fireflies to be caught."

many as 80 applicants vying for the free procedure. The Hathaways' essay garnered first place and their twins were born the following August.

This time only about 25 couples applied for the program but there were seven finalists that stood out. Horvath and his senior management staff went to bat for their favorites and eventually conceded.

"We decided to offer it to all three finalists. There were many others who were very deserving," Horvath said.

Horvath said the program is his way of giving something back to the community that has helped the clinic become the success it is.

Each IVF cycle costs between \$6,000 and \$7,000 for most patients. Drug costs are an additional \$1,500 to \$2,000.

It would be difficult to calculate the exact cost to the clinic

for each cycle giveaway, but it's a significant expense, he said.

"We did this once before and for that couple it's been a blessing," Horvath said.

Statistically, one of the three couples will be successful. Hopefully, all three will be, he said.

The Hughes' and the other couples that were selected as recipients — Naeela Marrero and Hernan Figueroa of Clifton Park and Brenda and Dan Fairbanks of Hudson Falls — had to meet eligibility criteria that included a financial need.

The essay was a way for applicants to put into the words why they wanted to become parents.

Hughes is the eldest of four siblings and a nurturer. Family members, neighbors, friends and pets have always turned to her in times of need. Her strong maternal instincts led her to a

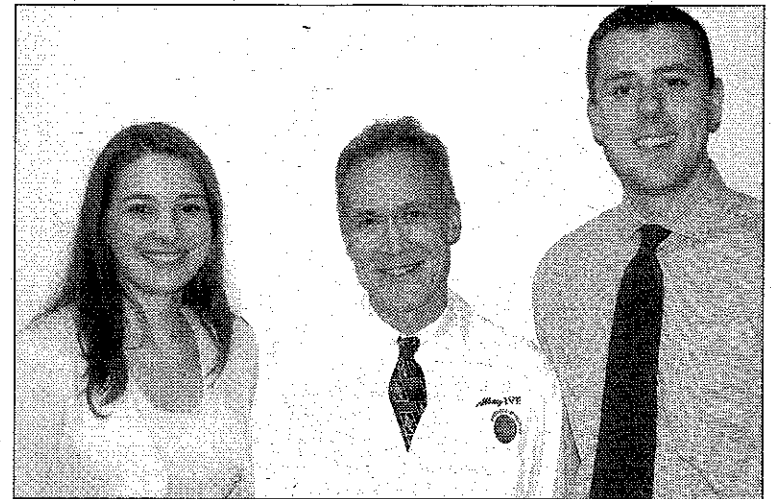


Photo provided

Dr. Peter Horvath, founder and director of Albany IVF, Fertility & Gynecology, PLLC on Northern Boulevard, center, poses for a photograph with Amy, left, and Steven Hughes, who won an essay contest and will now have a free in vitro fertilization treatment.

part-time career as a nanny while in college and have likewise served her well as a substitute teacher at the Averill Park Central School District. Even though Steven works as an information analyst with the FBI, it would have taken the couple years to save up for the procedure because they'd recently spent their entire savings to build a home.

It wasn't all that long ago that they had to deal with the heartbreak of a miscarriage. Up until

the eleventh week, the pregnancy had been characterized as text-book perfect, Hughes said.

"I miscarried the weekend after Thanksgiving. The doctors had no explanation," she said.

It abruptly brought to an end the celebration of moving into a new home, which now felt large and empty without the promise of a newborn to fill it.

"We're so grateful to have been selected. It's a wonderful opportunity they're giving us," Hughes said.