

# PHILANTHROPY

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## Gordon gives the gift of life

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**M**adeleine Gordon is helping others to do what she never could: have children.

Gordon spent 15 years struggling with infertility. "In my mind, the greatest loss of my life is that I was never able to become a mother," she said.

So in 1995, she started the Madeleine Gordon Gift of Life Foundation to fund couples who want in-vitro fertilization but can't afford it. The foundation has helped bring 43 babies into the world.

Gordon first asked friends for contributions. Today, the foundation gets money and help from community, corporate and individual donors. It works with Christ Hospital and the University of Cincinnati.

The foundation, which showed assets of 268,500 on its most recent tax return, assists couples with up to two cycles of IVF, covering a third of the \$8,100 to \$20,000 per cycle cost. Christ Hospital covers a third, and the couple pays, too.

Families must have a household income of less than \$80,000 and be in good health. The group's waiting list is vast. After a medical evaluation, prospective parents have an interview with the Gift of Life Foundation's board.

"We want to make sure we choose people who have a commitment not only to getting pregnant, but to parenthood," Gordon said.



COURTESY OF THE GIFT OF LIFE FOUNDATION

**Madeleine Gordon with babies Gift of Life helped bring into the world.**

Kristi Kidwell tried for six years to get pregnant, spending between \$8,000 and \$10,000 on various fertility treatments.

"It puts a horrible strain on your life, on your marriage, on your finances," said Kidwell, who works for an insurance company and whose husband is a plumber. "The doctor told

us there was nothing left to try but in-vitro. At some point you have to say enough is enough, but that's a hard thing to say."

She wrote to the foundation and was accepted. Through in-vitro she had a son, who is now 9. Somehow, two years later, Kidwell had another son without fertility treatment. Kidwell now sits on the foundation's board.

Gordon doesn't want families to forgo parenthood because they can't afford effective infertility treatment.

"To know that you could possibly have children but that you didn't have the opportunity would be beyond sad," said Gordon, who contributes her own money to the foundation.

After the children are born, Gordon, who came to Cincinnati from New Orleans in 1968 and taught literature in Finneytown for eight years, loves watching them grow up. She only gets involved if a family asks her to. Many do. She's attended plays and dance recitals. She is often called "Aunt Mady."

Gordon now sees some of the children entering their teen years. The oldest, Kathryn Lynn Mulhollen, was born in 1997. "They're becoming another generation of productive citizens," Gordon said. "It makes my heart feel like it's going to burst."

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