



A Tribute to

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Women
of the
Year
for 2006



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Women
of the
Year

Madeleine H. Gordon

Foundation helps families – and founder – celebrate the miracle of birth

By John Johnston
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In her East End condominium, Madeleine "Mady" Gordon reaches into a large box containing hundreds of greeting cards, thank-yous and birth announcements. Each includes a photo of a child or two.

"This is Anna," Gordon says.

"This is Kayla. She just got a puppy at Christmas."

"These two (twins) are fun – Spencer and Luke."

The cards and photos arrive year-round from eternally grateful parents – people who probably wouldn't be parents if not for Gordon.

In 1995 she created the nonprofit Madeleine Gordon Gift of Life Foundation to assist couples with infertility problems. The foundation operates in cooperation with Christ Hospital's Center for Reproductive Health to help defray the costs of in-vitro fertilization, which typically are not covered by health insurance.

The foundation has helped bring 29 babies into the world, including one this month.

Dr. Michael A. Thomas, a Cincinnati infertility specialist who has been part of Gift of Life since its inception, says it is the only program of its kind in the country.

"Mady spearheads everything," he says.

She announced the foundation's formation at her 50th birthday party in front of dozens of friends. Many of them knew she once taught American and British literature in Finneytown schools. Many knew she once was a successful Realtor, a member of the Million Dollar Club.

They most certainly knew of her volunteer work with a wide array of community groups.

But even many close friends didn't know the intimate details of Gordon's story until she shared them that day.

She always wanted to be a mother. She and her husband, Jerry – they are now divorced – had tried for 15 years to have children. When it didn't happen, Gordon sought out the



The Enquirer / Leigh Taylor

Spencer (left) and Luke Cousins, 3, were born with an assist from the Madeleine Gordon Gift of Life Foundation, which helps people with fertility problems.

nation's best fertility doctors, then followed their directions to the letter.

She was ecstatic when she became pregnant in the mid-1980s. But it was an ectopic pregnancy: the fertilized egg had implanted in her fallopian tube. She lost the child, and never became pregnant again.

Nearing age 50, she heard Rabbi Lewis Kamrass deliver a High Holy

Days sermon urging people to find something in life to be passionate about. As she considered how she could make a difference for others,

her thoughts turned to infertile couples who could benefit from modern medicine, but couldn't afford it.

"Can you imagine thinking there was a hope and resolution – but that it wasn't available to you?" she says.

One of Gordon's

"It takes my breath away every year when I see the breadth and scope of all of this."

Gordon

Birthplace: New York, raised in New Orleans

Residence: East End

Occupation: Community activist; founder and chair of Madeleine Gordon Gift of Life Foundation.

Education: Associate's degree, Stephens College, Columbia, Mo.; bachelor's degree in English, audiology and speech therapy, Tulane University, New Orleans; graduate work at Xavier University.

Best advice: "Each of us, as a part of life, experiences pain. What sets us apart is to what purpose we use the pain to shape the events that follow."

Woman of the Year nominators, Dr. Daniel B. Williams, an infertility specialist who works with Gift of Life, wrote: "The thing about Ms. Gordon that really makes her stand out is that she really does care about the people that her foundation helps."

Although Gordon does not select couples for the program, she personally answers the letters of couples who apply. She lends her financial support and raises money; this past holiday season, she mailed 2,500 cards seeking donations.

The first baby born with the foundation's help, Katie Mulhollen, will be 10 years old this year.

Gordon knows that Katie grew her hair long until, for her ninth birthday, she cut it and donated it to Locks of Love, which provides hairpieces to children who've lost their hair because of illness.

"She said she had received a gift at her birth, and she wanted to give a gift to someone else."

Gordon, too, has received a gift – an extended family that now includes 29 children and their parents. Twice a year, she gathers them for a winter holiday party and a summer picnic.

"It is indescribable. It takes my breath away every year when I see the breadth and scope of all of this."