

Mid-life mom launches Web site devoted to motherhood

By JORY JOHN

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WATSONVILLE -- In 2001, Angel La Liberte and her husband had a serious discussion. Both had been married before, but neither had any children. The pair decided, if possible, that they would like to conceive. La Liberte was 40 at the time.

"Basically, the attitude toward us was that it would be nothing short of a miracle," she said.

Against the odds, La Liberte's son was born in 2003. Three years after that, she had a daughter. Both were natural conceptions, occurring without the use of assisted reproductive technologies. And both babies were healthy.

When La Liberte turns 50 next year, her son will be 8 and her daughter will be 5. La Liberte realizes that she is on the forefront of mothers having children when they're older than 40, she said. And because she wants to form a community around the issue, La Liberte is launching www.flowerpowermom.com, "the truth about motherhood after 40."

La Liberte chose the name Flower Power Mom because of what the expression invokes.

"It brings home an understanding of where I'm coming from, and that is an era of acceptance, of embracing change and of the upheaval of social norms," she said. "And over-40 moms are upheaving the social norms."

La Liberte, a Watsonville resident, said she's starting Flower Power Mom to talk openly to mothers about the aftermath of having a baby in your 40s. She said that when Web sites and magazines discuss the topic, they tend to focus primarily on fertility.

"Newsweek did a piece on over-40 moms, how trial-and-error it was," she said. "I thought, it's great that they're bringing awareness to it, but here's another piece, talking about getting pregnant. They're not talking about what we do after pregnancy and how we're raising our kids. Let's talk about the long-term implications for our kids. Let's talk about what we bring to the table for our kids in terms of what we offer them, as older parents. And let's start sharing the skills and the knowledge needed to do it effectively, to their benefit. That's not happening, yet."

La Liberte said there are various reasons why women wait until their 40s to have children. "For a lot of women, time got away," she said. "Nobody I've ever spoken to sat there and thought, I'm going to wait until I'm in my 40s.' You were supposed to do something with yourself. We were liberated. Nobody thought about the long-term repercussions. I think that

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we just went through life, we had our careers. We also had a higher standard for marriage. We wanted relationships that were going to last, relationships that were worthy. You were going to wait for Mr. Right. The issue there is that your body doesn't wait."

Flower Power Mom, which launched this week, is a compendium of articles, interviews, personal stories and reference material. "My intention is to inform, with humor, with my inner Erma Bombeck very much in place," she said.

The Web site ultimately will be devoted to her day-to-day life, La Liberte said, focusing on the profound changes that accompany mid-life motherhood.

"These guys can take over your life," she said. "The main message is Hey we're here. We made it. Now let's talk about it.' Because once you've made it to that plateau of being an over-40 mom, then OK, you've succeeded. It's like getting your dream job, or winning the lottery."

La Liberte said she's planning to update the site's blog at least a couple times per week.

Recent blog entries include "A Mom For All Seasons," concerning Cynthia Wilson James, who has dreams of starting an annual convention for mothers over 40 and "The Boy Who Never Made It Back to the Future" about Darren Manley, an author who has written a book about growing up with older parents and thinking, for a time, that they were his grandparents.

La Liberte spent a year-and-a-half gathering information for the site, often staying up late, even though she regularly had to wake up at 5:30 a.m. "If I was going to do it, I wanted to do something that was really exemplary," she said. "I wanted people to look at the site and say, This is good. I can trust this site."

FLOWER POWER MOM

WHAT: A forum for women who gave birth after 40 -- where the truth about mid-life motherhood is revealed.

WHO: Angel La Liberte

BACKGROUND: Against the odds and well into her 40s, La Liberte, bachelor's in psychology, gave birth to two children (in 2002 and 2005) without the aid of medical fertility treatments. **CAREER:** An experienced writer and public campaigner on divorce and relationship issues in the media limelight, La Liberte was a regular 'guest expert' handling live phone-ins on more than 200 television and talk shows -- including BBC and ITV news and breakfast programs -- and newspaper and magazine features, in the UK throughout the 1990s. She moved to Canada in 2002 and launched a national network advocating more ethical business practices for complementary health practitioners.

She moved to California in 2007 to raise her family and 'weigh in' on the controversy surrounding the rise of the 'granny-moms.' **AUTHOR:** 'Relationship Breakdown -- A Survival Guide', was published in the UK and Europe. Upcoming book 'Flower Power Mom.'

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