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Midlife moms, unite

New Web site will be forum for their special concerns

By JORY JOHN

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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," said La Liberte, who lives in Watsonville, Calif.

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 reproductive technology. 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. 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 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 up-heaving the social norms."

La Liberte 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.

"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."

Flower Power Mom is a compendium of humorous articles, interviews, personal stories and reference material. Such categories as "Blast from the Past" serve to unify mothers of a certain age through nostalgia, La Liberte said.

"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 midlife 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 of times per week. Her writing will be thoughtful, researched and not just a rehash of what she had for breakfast that morning, she said. She is an experienced writer and public campaigner on divorce and relationship issues and has often been a "guest expert" on radio and TV shows.

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

La Liberte said she is writing what she knows and what she feels strongly about.

"You can't feel more strongly about anything other than your children," she said. "Especially when you've waited on them as long as we have. I think that we are very close to reaching some kind of critical mass where mothers find each other. And that's where the Internet and being online is a fabulous resource."
