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## When motherhood begins after 40

*McClatchy-Tribune*

WATSONVILLE, Calif. - 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, they would like to conceive. La Liberte was 40 years old 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 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 recently launched [www.flowerpowermom.com](http://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 up-heaving the social norms."

La Liberte, a Watsonville, Calif., resident, said she started Flower Power Mom to talk openly to mothers about the aftermath of having a baby in your 40s. She said 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 a variety of reasons 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 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 is a compendium of humorous articles, interviews, personal stories and reference material. Categories such as "Blast from the Past" 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 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 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."

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