

Championing midlife motherhood

By Jory John

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WATSONVILLE -- Today, Mother's Day, culminates a six-week campaign by county moms to celebrate mothers over the age of 40.

Watsonville resident Angel La Liberte, the founder of flowerpowermom.com -- a website devoted to midlife motherhood -- launched the campaign in April in order to increase awareness, honor over-40 moms and encourage the sharing of their individual stories.

La Liberte, 49, the mother of a 7-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter, said while she wasn't sure what the reaction would be to the campaign, she wanted to clear up stereotypes about over-40 moms, adding that there is a lot of unnecessary judgment when it comes to midlife motherhood.

"There is that label of being selfish," La Liberte said. "You delayed having children, it was an

afterthought, you put yourself first. In fact, this is the antithesis of an unwanted pregnancy. The idea of an over-40 mom being selfish couldn't be further from the truth."

La Liberte said at first she didn't realize she was a part of such a widespread network. She said she simply trusted her intuition when thinking about starting a forum six months ago, due to feelings of isolation and feeling differently than other new mothers in their 20s and 30s.

Since the blog's launch, La Liberte's story has been picked up by newspapers across the country, and she has received e-mails from new and prospective mothers around the world.

The positive reaction

is a testament to the fact that she is a part of a pioneering generation of mothers intent on having children, even if it doesn't necessarily tie into mainstream thinking by doctors and others, La Liberte said.

"I've realized that I'm not alone in this," she said. "There are many more mothers out there in the same situation as me. As it turns out, I was right. There was something really big here."



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According to the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics released in April, there was a 4 percent increase in birthrate for over-40 moms in 2008, the highest rate since 1967. All other age groups experienced a decline.

La Liberte -- who is considering compiling a book of her "best of" Flower Power Mom blog posts -- said she has had to learn how to find a balance of writing, corresponding with other new mothers and raising two children. In addition to telling her own stories on the site, La Liberte writes profiles of other new mothers over 40 who have experienced the challenges and joys of midlife motherhood.

One such mother, Jodi Boswell, 47, a Santa Cruz resident who contacted La Liberte after reading about her, said she was told her chances of conceiving her second child in her 40s was slim. Still, newly married to her husband, Terry, Boswell wanted to try. A few months later, Boswell was pregnant. She eventually delivered a healthy baby boy at home, despite doctors' warnings.

Boswell, who is also the mother of a 12-year-old daughter, said that getting involved in La Liberte's Flower Power Mom campaign was an easy choice.

"I just wanted to support Angel and her work," Boswell said. "It's important. Women love a strong connection and I wasn't finding that connection with other new moms."

Boswell said midlife motherhood has given her a unique perspective, allowing her to use her life's experiences and newfound wisdom to her child-raising benefit. She has posted an ad on Craigslist, encouraging mothers wanting a birth at home to contact her, due to a lack of available information. Boswell said she simply followed her instincts throughout the pregnancy.

"Do what you feel is right for you," she said. "That's so hard to do when you're younger."

La Liberte, who funds her work through Flower Power Mom T-shirt sales, said she's encouraged by both her family and her readers.

"I've had many e-mails saying I am so glad you're here, I am so glad I'm not alone," La Liberte said. "I've had some letters saying whatever you do, don't stop, I've had lots of affirmations. I am picking up the torch and carrying it for everyone, even if I'm just one little voice."



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