

# Frozen in Time

Sophomore Lexi Heller shares unique birth story



In the United States, about 12 percent of women aged 15-24 have difficulty getting pregnant or carrying pregnancy, and about 6 percent of women aged 15-44 are unable to get pregnant. In this scenario,

there are multiple options that one can take- one of which being in vitro fertilization, which sophomore Lexi Heller can vouch for.

“When my parents got married, they couldn’t have children naturally, so they resorted to in vitro fertilization,” Heller said. “They went through with the in vitro fertilization in order to have my older siblings, Ashley and Adam, who are 20 year old twins. They ended up really liking the process, so they decided to try another time.”

In vitro fertilization, or IVF, is the same as the process of normal fertilization, but instead of a sperm and an egg combining naturally, they’re combined manually in a laboratory dish. When the egg gets fertilized, the embryo is then transferred back into the mother’s uterus.

“My parents’ second attempt at in vitro fertilization ended up being successful, because the egg got fertilized and then developed into an embryo,” Heller said. “The embryo split, making me and my brother Jake fraternal twins.”

Although births from in vitro fertilization account for only 1.3 percent of all births, over 20 percent of all multiple births are resulting from the in vitro fertilization process, and about 1 in 4 IVF pregnancies result in multiples.

“After a short period of time they noticed that my embryo wasn’t developing as fast as my brother’s was,” Heller said. “They decided to freeze my embryo at -196 degrees in liquid nitrogen for a year, a process known as the cryopreservation of embryos. A year after my brother was born I was implanted into my mom, so technically, my brother and I aren’t really twins, being that he is 17 and I’m 16, but we could have been.”

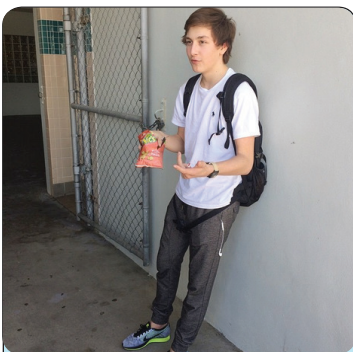
Though the process has proved successful for thousands of women who

would have been otherwise infertile, women who gave birth after in vitro fertilization treatment are up to five times as likely to suffer from serious complications. Not to mention, babies born as a result of fertility treatments such as this are more likely to be born prematurely, stillborn or incredibly underweight. Luckily for Heller and her siblings, none of that ever occurred, though she faced complications at birth.

“When I was born I had thrombocytopenia, which is a low blood platelet count. The doctors had to cut out a small piece of my skull to make sure that there was enough oxygen in my blood,” Heller said. “Overall, I’m really thankful that the process was successful, because otherwise my siblings, and I wouldn’t be here and my parents never would have been able to have children.” *Story by Alexa Kravitz*

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“When I was playing hockey, I went in front of the net and our defense took a shot and hit me...”

When I went to the hospital, they took an MRI and saw a lot of internal bleeding in the area of my brain associated with speech. Five days after I was sent home from the hospital, I had a seizure... They asked me my name and I couldn’t think of it.”



“I came out at the end of last year. My mom didn’t care, and I haven’t told my dad yet, but I think he knows. In the back of my mind I always knew, but I shoved it down. I tried to be attracted to the opposite sex, but I couldn’t. I didn’t want to be gay. It comes with so much baggage. People look at you so differently.”



“My daughter’s name is Skylah, and she’s 5 months old... My mom was upset when I told her, but she was the one who ended up convincing me to keep her.

Being a teen mom has made me see things in a completely different way... Playing with my daughter and seeing her happy is the most fulfilling thing in the world.”



“The death of my mom was the most difficult thing that ever happened to me. It changed me because it wasn’t just her death; she had Alzheimer’s for 20 years, so it was a process. So for me, she was dead a long time ago. I couldn’t tell you when she really died. It was hard because it wasn’t just one morning, it was little by little every single day.”