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COMMUNITY

Local woman wants to have a baby— but needs the community's help

By Lisa Tallyn
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A local woman who has been on a long and bumpy journey to become a mom has launched a crowd-funding campaign with the hope of making that dream a reality.

Jenny Lorito, who is 38 and single, has always known she wanted to be a mother.

She spent three years trying to adopt through the Children's Aid Society, but when that didn't happen she decided to try to have a child naturally.

During the initial screening for Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) she was shocked when her blood work revealed that she had Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML).

"CML is a blood cancer that affects the bone marrow. It is not caused by the environment, lifestyle or genetic factors. Getting it is just dumb luck," said Lorito. "However, as far as cancers go, this kind of leukemia is treatable and patients live long, happy, stable lives. Had I not gone in to become a mother, I would not have found out I have leukemia. Taking the step to become a mom saved my life."

After her diagnosis, her doctor recommended she begin in vitro fertilization (IVF) to retrieve her eggs before starting a lifetime of chemotherapy.

With the support of her close friends and family, nursing staff and doctors Lorito began a whirlwind month of in vitro fertilization (IVF), a bone marrow biopsy, an egg retrieval and dealing with her leukemia diagnosis. At the end of it she had one viable blastocyst embryo.

The embryo was preserved to implant once she adjusted to her leukemia treatment. There was hope she could take a break from the daily oral chemotherapy (which she began on Mother's Day 2013), to carry her baby, but she learned that would be too great a risk to her health and carrying her own child was not a practical solution— so surrogacy appeared the only viable option.

"What began as a very affordable procedure (IUI) quickly snowballed into a sum almost 100 times the initial amount. As a single, self-employed artist and arts educator this sum is unfathomable," said Lorito.

"The last piece of the puzzle is my surrogate. I have a strong network of family, friends and clients who live nearby. My nieces and nephews can't wait to meet their cousin, my students are lined up to help babysit and my doctors are behind

me in this quest. Against all odds I made this embryo— my underdog, my fighter (just like Rocky), my Rocco." She plans to name her baby Rocco.

Lorito launched a crowd-funding campaign last month on Indiegogo called "Go Rocco!" It can be found at <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/go-rocco>

She hopes the campaign will bring in the needed funds to make her dream of becoming a mom a reality, and also to raise awareness about cancer and fertility.



JENNY LORITO

**'Taking the step to
become a mom
saved my life.'
—Lorito**

Gifts and perks have been donated, which people receive for making a donation.

To date \$15,465 has been raised. The Go Rocco! Campaign closes on midnight Dec. 25. Any extra funds that come in (above the \$90,000 goal) will be donated to Fertile Future to help those with cancer become parents.

The Go Rocco! Campaign can also be found on <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Go-Rocco/1562838090598035> and on twitter at https://twitter.com/go_rocco