

# Knoxville News Sentinel Faith and Family

## Jan. 31, 2015

### New additions enrich families with fresh possibilities and love

By Sherri Gardner Howell

There is something surreal about writing this column as my 10-dayold grandson lies in his DayDreamer seat beside me, alternately sleeping, stretching and occasionally opening his eyes and softly grunting, just to make sure it's still an hour before feeding time. He is adjusting to his doctor suggested "schedule" of every four hours instead of three very well. Still, as three hours tick by, King doesn't want us to forget that time is near.

I have had a "good" baby, and I have had a demanding, fussy baby. King is a good baby so far, and his first-time parents are doing exceptionally well. As soon as the pain got better for Mom and the anxiety subsided for Dad, they settled into a new family routine that is working for everyone. Both are tired, but not exhausted. At least one always sleeps when he sleeps, and they have learned to let the baby monitor help, so he sometimes sleeps in his room instead of beside their bed.



This weekend is epic. Younger son Brett, Olivia and grandson Cohen are in Nashville from Seattle to welcome King to the family. Having both my boys and their families in the same place doesn't happen often enough, and I am in heaven. Watching Cohen, who is 9, hold King last night filled my heart. He is such a loving, kind little boy, and he will be a phenomenal cousin. Brett and Olivia hold family as close as Neville and I do, so King is blessed. The blessings continue on his mom's side, too, with grandfather Mike, cousins Kinley and Kanyan and aunts Keela, Kara and uncle Wayne.

Babies stir such emotions in a family. The world is open to them, their futures so unknown. It is impossible to even imagine the possibilities open to this little baby. What will the world be like when he enters the job market? What will he love? What will he do that brings that smile, that satisfaction to his inner soul? Just as I look around at all the "stuff" he has to keep him safe and comfortable in his new world, it is light years from the stuff that surrounded my newborns just 30-plus years ago. Some of it is so simple — hand sanitizers, for example. Some are amazing — baby monitors that you can access from your computer so you can check on him from work.

What hasn't changed is the baby. They still come into the world so helpless, so dependent on the people who love them to take care of them, to help them grow and thrive and learn. They still look at all who wander into their line of vision with wonder and love and trust. King calms when you hold him, when he feels his blanket wrapped close around him, when he hears his parents' voices. Already he has us wrapped around his little finger as we are awestruck at every little smile, every coo.

Families change every time a new person joins the fold — whether by birth or marriage or adoption. I would have quickly told you our family was perfect when it was just the four of us. Then there were five, then seven and now, eight. Each addition enriches us, makes us more than we imagined we could be. Extended family does the same — nephews, cousins that take on numbers like 2nd, 3rd, etc. that mean nothing in the ranking they have in your heart.

While we watch and wonder what King will be, what he will bring to our family, he may also be looking around at the adoring eyes looking at him. I can't guarantee him much about the future, but I can promise him the most important thing of all: He will never lack for love of family.

*Sherri Gardner Howell may be reached at [gardners@tds.net](mailto:gardners@tds.net).*