



Couple's first child not a shock, but second caught them unaware

Kay Luna | Posted: Thursday, October 23, 2008 12:00 am

ABOUT THE SERIES: This article is part of a periodic series on family planning among adults 18-30 years old, something that is not often talked about in public. The series is meant to start the conversation in the Quad-City region.

They always wanted to be young parents.

Darren and Brandi Dykstra, both 31, of Bettendorf, talked about that a lot before they got married six years ago.

So, it came as no surprise to them — or their family and friends — when, a year after their wedding, their son, Mason, was born.

“We were trying but not trying,” she said.

But no one expected Brandi’s next pregnancy with their daughter, Anlynn, which happened when their firstborn was only 5 months old.

“We weren’t even talking about having a second kid,” Darren said, watching the youngsters color pages at the living room coffee table.

“But I was excited as soon as I found out,” Brandi added.

While the pregnancy and birth of the now-5-year-old Mason went smoothly, the arrival of the couple’s second child did not go so easily.

Brandi remembers her pregnancy with “Annie” feeling much different than her first and that things were extremely hectic at home.

Not only was she taking care of an infant, and pregnant, but she also was working full-time at Wells Fargo Bank, making her responsible for the family’s primary income at the time.

Her husband was working part-time and attending Western Illinois University to get his teaching certificate and a second bachelor’s degree.

Then, Annie was born 10 weeks early. As a complication that can occur with premature birth, the baby experienced bleeding in her brain, which caused brain damage, Brandi said.

Annie, now almost 4, has cerebral palsy as a result and experiences some difficulty walking. She and the family are involved with the March of Dimes, Brandi said.

Yet, the Dykstras — who graduated together from Morrison (Ill.) High School in 1995 — say they have embraced the challenges that came with marriage and parenthood.

Brandi still works at Wells Fargo as a credit analyst in the business banking division. Darren teaches fifth grade at Logan Elementary School in Moline.

Their children are close in age, as they were with their own siblings. If anything, Darren wishes maybe the children had been born further apart.

But other than that, neither would change anything about their family even if they could, despite the trials.

“I think about that a lot,” Brandi said. “We both firmly believe everything happens like it’s supposed to, for a reason.”

That includes the impossibility of them adding to their family. Medical complications after Annie’s birth led Brandi to have a hysterectomy.

She wishes she could have made that choice for herself, but accepts that she can't.

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