

Published October 4th, 2017

Lynn's Top Five

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have an agency handle every detail for you or you can do some things yourself, such as identifying a surrogate candidate and coordinating medical procedures. Other good news revolves around technology which now means that you can screen for genetically viable eggs thus avoiding multiple or unsuccessful births. Your costs for this path to parenthood can range from \$50,000 at a minimum to well over \$125,000. For more information from one group that specializes in surrogacy go to www.growinggenerations.com.

3) Foster Care Adoptions: In my chat with Megan Cohen, she explained to me that because these children are wards of the state, the state pays for almost all the costs associated with foster care adoptions. Within these types of adoptions are choices that can include foster to adopt, kids with special needs and safe surrender (infants). You can learn more about these possibilities by going to www.adoptuskids.org and click on the link to California.

4) International Adoptions: Within the context of this short column, I cannot begin to do this topic justice. It seems that costs for these vary wildly depending on the circumstances, the country involved and their fees and regulations, the travel costs (including yours to visit, maybe more than once) as well as fees and legal costs back here. According to Adoptive Families Magazine as quoted on www.americanadoptions.com International Adoption costs in 2012 - 2013 ranged from about \$30,000 to \$45,000. You can read more about international adoptions on the U.S. Department of State's Intercountry Adoption Website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/country-information/learn-about-a-country.html>.

5) Tax Breaks for Adopting: Some adoption costs can be offset with the Federal Adoption Tax credit which rises to \$13,570 this year, but phases out for parents with more than \$203,540 modified adjusted gross income and gone when that number is \$243,540 and above. Parents who adopt a child with special needs can claim the full amount. As a non-refundable credit, it can only be used in the year you adopt if you have

Back-to-school time, Halloween trick-or-treaters, opening holiday presents with small children - all of these Norman Rockwell moments were heartbreaking for me and my husband for many years. After abandoning countless medical options with no results, we heard about open adoptions, a relatively new idea back then, and we were all in! Almost 29 years later and our family continues to grow with the addition of our beautiful granddaughter two years ago.

For those of you who may be struggling to grow a family as we were, and medical options aren't your solution either, let's explore other opportunities and their costs. If you are still reading this column please know that the matters of the heart and family are at the core of your decision. To be helpful, I'm going to focus just on the financial planning aspect and not the real reason we adopt - love and family.

1) Open domestic adoptions: Megan Cohen, an attorney with Family Formation Law Offices in Lafayette, told me that for these adoptions you and the birth mother will know each other's identities and how much contact you have is up to both you and the birth mother. The costs for these adoptions can vary quite a bit, but remembering you are in the Bay Area, you should be prepared to spend up to \$40,000. You might think this will mostly be for the birth mother's medical care, however, thankfully in California we have MediCal, so the actual medical costs are not likely to be the largest expense. According to Megan, most of the expenses are for agency and legal fees, home studies, and costs for the birth mother. You can read more about adoption on their website: www.familyformation.com.

2) Surrogacy: Friend and colleague at EP Wealth, Tyler Robuck, CFP(r), and his husband, determined several years ago that surrogacy offered them their best alternative at building a family. As with adoption, the array of choices and opportunities is stunning as are the potential costs. The good news is that you can choose to

a tax liability to offset. More information is available on the IRS website: www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html.

As you can see there are many ways to build a family when giving birth to children yourself is not an option. I hope that no matter what path you choose, you will carefully research all the providers and experts you can, so that you find the team that is the best fit for you. It's worth the time, the calls, the meetings - it's a forever decision.

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[back](#)

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