

Energy brings you... **know your Neighbor**

Staci Toporek Baby Planner, Chappaqua

By Martin Wilbur

In her circle of friends, Staci Toporek was the first to get married and start a family. So it was only natural that when it was time for Toporek's friends to have children, they would turn to her for advice.

Whatever questions they had, Toporek was there to provide a helping hand or words of encouragement to ease their worries.

"I've always been the go-to girl for many years," she said. "They've always just asked for my expertise and I've given it to them and loved it. They know I have a passion for this."

Toporek's passion for helping others who are overwhelmed by an impending birth of a child was so great that she decided to use her acquired knowledge and life experience to start her own business. For several months Toporek has been advising clients, but it was only about two weeks ago that she officially launched the Mommy's Wooby Web site, a baby-planning concierge service for the expectant parent. Whether it's advising moms about the basics of changing diapers and sterilizing bottles; organizing a nursery; customizing a registry; or baby-proofing a house, Toporek guides mothers and couples through what can be a nerve-wracking period.

She also helps families plan baby showers and baby-naming parties, although that is a small portion of her business at this point.

Working through largely word-of-mouth, Toporek networked to create associations with area merchants, doctors' offices and tradesmen who either list her service or who she calls upon to assist her clients.

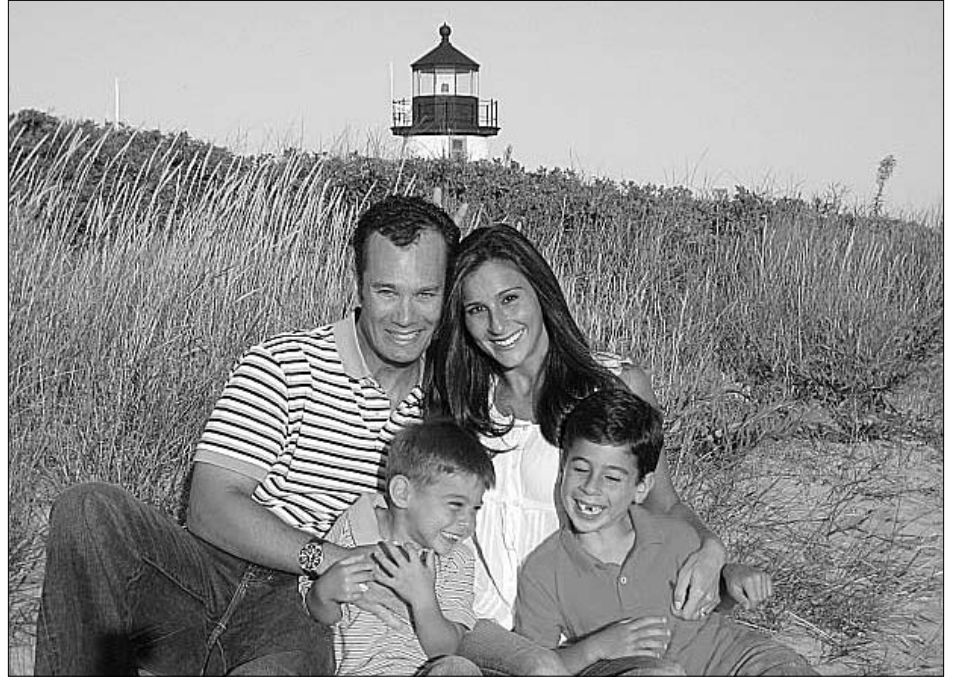
"I am your concierge," Toporek said. "People just call me when they need me for anything that's related to leading up to the birth of a baby or after."

In many ways, the start of Mommy's Wooby, named because virtually every child—and mom—needs a security blanket or "wooby," was a natural progression for Toporek. She remembered that as a young girl growing up in Forest Hills, Queens, she would naturally gravitate to the moms in the park with babies, almost as much as she gravitated to her own friends.

For most of her time at NYU, where she graduated with a degree in education and communications, Toporek was the regular babysitter for a couple with three children. It wasn't just on Saturday nights that she looked after the three youngsters—she regularly helped the family Monday through Thursday evenings. The couple, with which Toporek remains close, wondered whether she would be overwhelmed but that was never a problem.

"We really established a lifelong friendship," she said. "So it was more than just a job."

Toporek may not have known it at the time, and it may be a decade later, but that



Staci Toporek with her husband, Jeff, and two sons, Jake and Max.

on-the-job training provided the groundwork for her new venture. Less than a year after college, she married her husband, Jeff, who works in the financial industry, and they moved to San Francisco for two years. During her time out west she worked for Worldcom.

Upon the couple's return to New York, Toporek was a substitute teacher in the Scarsdale School District but never pursued a full-time position: Her first son, Jake, came along when she was 26. Less than two years later her second child, Max, arrived and she preferred to stay home with them.

With so many mothers-to-be who are busy and uncertain about various aspects of preparing for a child, Toporek has found a niche to help. Some of her clients are from the area, but many are busy working moms in the city who want everything to go smoothly, particularly with tasks that they can control, such as designing an appropriate nursery or listing items on a reg-

istry. As Toporek mentioned, "I'm there to relax the mom."

"I give them choices," Toporek said. "I don't make the decisions for them unless they ask, which they do, but I give them choices."

The launch of Mommy's Wooby also coincides with Toporek having some extra time, now that both of her sons are in school all day. But she also doesn't want her operation to grow too fast. After all, Toporek still wants to be a "wooby" for her own children, whether it's to help with homework or to be there to ask them how their day was when they come home.

"I want to be the best baby planner out there. But I have to be careful of what I want to wish for," she said.

To learn more about Mommy's Wooby, contact Toporek at (914) 450-9787, e-mail staci@westchesterbabyplanner.com, or visit www.mommyswooby.com.




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