

## **Family awaits baby's homecoming**

### **A Springettsbury Township couple got a glimpse of their future daughter**

By ANGIE MASON

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**May 25, 2007** — Anne Thompson waited for her husband, Rick ,to wake up before opening the e-mail in her inbox.

When he joined her at the computer, "I just looked at him and said 'Do you have butterflies in your stomach?'" she said.

He did. And then they opened the message to get the photo they'd been waiting for.

It showed a Guatemalan woman holding a baby named Mercedes. One day, Mercedes will belong to the Thompsons.

Anne and Rick were officially placed on the waiting list to adopt a baby girl from Guatemala a few weeks ago.

In the first photos, the couple couldn't really see the child, so their attorney in Guatemala snapped some more. In those, the Thompsons could see the 7-pound, 3-ounce girl's round face, chubby cheeks and pink tongue poking out.

"It was exciting," Anne said. "She's cute."

But it doesn't feel like the baby belongs to the Springettsbury Township couple just yet.

"It's a hard concept," Anne said. "I was calling her our 'maybe baby.'"

The Thompsons adopted their son Luke in Harrisburg, so they're familiar with the process. But they were in contact with Luke's birth mother throughout the process. When he arrived, it was much different than getting a photo.

"I was like, OK, here's a baby, he needs us to take care of him," Anne said.

Mercedes' birth mother has several more chances to change her mind about giving up the baby - who will be named Karly Elizabeth Mercedes by the Thompsons.

The Thompsons lost two children previously - one was stillborn, and one died at just three days old. Anne said she'd be just as cautious about getting excited if she were pregnant.

"There's a long way to go yet," she said.

The Thompsons are in the process of submitting power-of-attorney paperwork so the Guatemalan lawyer can represent them in the adoption proceedings.

Then, a social worker will interview the foster mother caring for the child and the birth mother, to make sure she understands her rights, said Jennifer Miller, international adoption counselor with Adoptions from the Heart.

The attorney will seek embassy approval to have DNA testing completed, to ensure the baby belongs to the birth mother and was not stolen or sold, Miller said.

If all goes well, the Thompsons will be approved for adoption. More attorneys will review the paperwork before a judge can approve the adoption. Then, documents for the baby - new birth certificate, passport, visa packet - are issued.

Then, the Thompsons can take their new daughter home. It could take six to nine months, Miller said, but every case is different.

"There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes," Miller said.

The Thompsons will get new photos of their baby periodically. Anne would like to visit the baby, but financially the couple can't do it.

"Now it's like, OK, I sit and wait," Anne said.

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