



PHOTO BY LEA TYRRE

Mothering in the '90s

*K*athleen Nelson was not looking for a little girl's hair to curl. Her husband Gary did not yearn for a son to play catch with.

"First we said we would have children before we were 30, and then it was before 35," says Nelson, who, like a growing number of mothers, waited until she was 37 to have a baby.

Nelson's life goals were formulated in the '60s and '70s, when for the first time young women were told that fulfillment could come through channels other than parenting. She and her husband Gary travelled extensively and worked long days building careers. She owns Small World, a toddler-to-grade-3 private school serving 250 children, and he is president of Matrix Technologies in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Nelson's hesitance to undertake parenting was partly due to the nuclear families she saw exploding. She wondered if even her marriage — albeit good — would skid on the statistics. "I lost a lot of confidence in families lasting forever. I didn't think anything was forever. Growing up in the era of Vietnam, I had friends who went and never came back," she recalls. "Life seemed fleeting. It has taken me a long time of living for the moment to realize that tomorrow does come."

Then, at 37, gratified by her marital and career success, she hearkened to the patter of her ticking biological clock and decided having a child would be a very personal way to contribute to society.

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