

Lean Cuisine: Bison is both nutritious and delicious

as featured in

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR MAGAZINE.

Plymouth

M A G A Z I N E

OCTOBER 2008
\$3.95

A Check-Out Girl to Check Out

Plymouth native
and actress
Kirsten Gronfield
makes the grocery
store funny

Finding THEIR Family

KARE 11's **Rod Simons** and
his wife believe in the power
of adoption — and want to
spread the word

plus
From
Paris to
Plymouth
Vintage-inspired
fashions
for fall

contents

PLYMOUTH MAGAZINE · VOLUME 5 · ISSUE 3



12

Departments

18 Taste | Discover the benefits of bison! Nutritionists weigh in on its advantages. Plus, find your neighborhood source for the locally raised meat.

People

22 Kirsten Gronfield | When Gronfield moved from Plymouth to Hollywood, she wasn't sure what to expect. Luckily for the rest of us, she found success on TBS's *10 Items or Less*.

Feature

24 Fall Fashion | Transport yourself to Paris with this season's vintage-inspired styles. From the flapper dresses of the 1920s to masculine designs of the 1940s, our models channel eras of elegance.



22

28 Cover Story | KARE-11's Rod Simons and his wife, Pam, wanted to fill their Plymouth home with the pitter-patter of little feet. But when complications arose, they took a non-traditional approach to building a family. They adopted Annie, a beautiful baby girl, and couldn't be happier. Now, they're sharing their story.

CityScope

12 Faces | From singing in Estonia to leading Music in Plymouth, harmony follows Mele Willis wherever she goes. **StyleWatch** | Plymouth Magazine's favorite fall fashion trends. **Gallery** | Check out the costumes at the Emperor's Ball.

COVER PHOTO BY MARSHALL FRANKLIN LONG

IN EVERY ISSUE

10 Behind the Scenes

36 Around Town

38 Last Glance

Finding THEIR Family



Everybody has a “creation story”—a “where did I come from” anecdote often passed down from parents to children. Some people’s stories are comedic, others are tragic and a few people have a story that’s as close to a fairy tale as real life gets.



By Liz Kohman

Photos by Marshall Franklin Long





Did You Know? November is National Adoption Month.



THE SNUGLLY DUCKLING > Annie loves trips to Plymouth's Three Ponds Park, where she and her parents search for animals such as turtles and ducks.

Annie Simons, who is almost 3 years old, is one of those fairy tale people. She was born in California to a mother who loved her but knew she wouldn't be able to keep her. So, her mother searched for the perfect parents—turning down several couples along

the way—before she met Rod and Pam Simons of Plymouth.

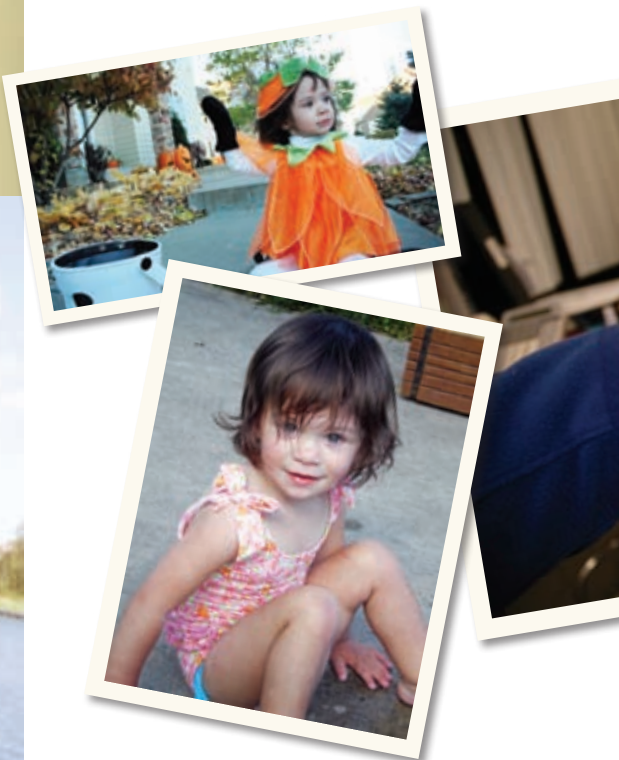
“What are you going to name her?” Annie's birth mom asked Pam as they sat in the back seat of a car on the way to a restaurant. Pam paused for a moment and tried not to panic. The women had met minutes before, and Pam desperately didn't want to do anything wrong.

Pam and her husband, Rod, who hosts Sports Final on KARE-11, had been married about seven years, and they had hoped to become parents from the start. Pam took a deep breath and explained that she was hoping to combine family names, Anna and Bess.

“Annie” the birth mother repeated, and she took Pam's hand and placed it on her belly. (The Brothers Grimm can go home now; this is a fairy tale with a very happy ending.)

“It was a bond that was amazing,” says Pam in her soft North Carolina accent. “The birth mother will always be a hero.”

Rod and Pam had such a wonderful experience with adoption that they feel it's their responsibility to help pay it forward. As a member of the board of directors for the Amy Silberberg Chapter of the Gift of Adoption Fund, Pam works to help other prospective adoptive parents. The fund offers grants that



... AND EVERYTHING NICE > Whether the cutest pumpkin at the Halloween party or shining in the sun, Rod and Pam say Annie was exactly the addition their family needed.



“Adoption is a wonderful experience. It has its highs and lows, but it's been a miraculous experience for us. We wouldn't be the same without it.”

—ROD SIMONS, KARE-11 SPORTS SHOW HOST



Get Involved

Attend the **Amy Silberberg Chapter of the Gift of Adoption Fund's fall gala Oct. 25** at Minneapolis Central Library. To learn more about the gala and the Gift of Adoption Fund, visit Giftofadoption.org.





IN THE BEGINNING > On the day Annie was born, the reporter in Rod came out: "Pam cut the [umbilical] cord, so she's crying, Annie's crying, it's crazy. I wrote down [Annie's] information on my hand so I wouldn't forget, and I wanted to have a picture of that, just to have that moment." At right, Pam meets her new daughter the day she was born.



A HOP, SKIP AND A JUMP > Sidewalk chalk is one of Annie's true loves, along with music and hockey.

average around \$3,500 to help adoptive parents pay legal fees associated with adoption. In June, she and Rod hosted the inaugural Golf for the Gift, a golf tournament, dinner and silent auction to raise money for the nonprofit organization. They have plans to make it an annual event.

Sitting in their kitchen listening to Annie sing the Minnesota Wild Anthem in another room, it's easy to understand why the Simons feel so compelled to share their story and their good fortune.

Rod and Pam met 11 years ago on an airport shuttle bus in Phoenix. "[Knowing my navigational skills], I shouldn't have met her," jokes Rod, who is notorious for not reading signs in airports. But on this day, he was in the right place at the right time. Both were in Phoenix on business from Seattle. Rod was a sports reporter for a Seattle television station and Pam worked at Boston Scientific. A friend and colleague traveling with Pam introduced the couple, and they were engaged about seven months later.

"We were both older and very career-focused," Pam says. "We balance each other very well." It doesn't hurt that Pam is a huge sports fan.

Pam and Rod were married in an outdoor wedding in Seattle, and they knew right away that they wanted to have a family. "Family and children were such a huge part of our lives," Pam says. "It wasn't long before we figured out it was going to be hard to conceive."

The couple visited a fertility clinic but didn't feel the fertility treatments were the right option for them. "There were no promises with in vitro, and I wasn't excited about Pam having to go thru that whole process," Rod says. "Our hearts gravitated to adoption, and our prayers sealed it." They started exploring international adoption, but then life took a detour. Shortly after they got married, the couple ended up taking

"It was a bond that was amazing. The birth mother will always be a hero."

—PAM SIMONS,
ADOPTIVE MOTHER OF 3-YEAR-OLD ANNIE

in Pam's sister's three children. They put their international adoption plans on hold.

In 2002, Pam, whose job involves running clinical research programs for medical devices, got a job offer in Minnesota. By that time, she and Rod were no longer taking care of her sister's children, and they decided it was time for a change of scenery.

Their move to Minnesota was exactly what they needed. They fell in love with the area and Rod got a job in the sports depart-



HAPPILY EVER AFTER > The Simons say Annie always will know she is adopted and will be able to meet her birth mother some day, if she chooses—but that doesn't make her any less their darling daughter.

ment at KSTP. In 2004, they started thinking about becoming parents again.

“With all the kids out there looking for love and a wonderful home, [adoption] was the *perfect* fit for us,” Rod says. “It was a heartfelt decision, without a doubt.”

Rod and Pam enrolled in pre-adoptive counseling and classes through the Children's Home Society & Family Services (www.childrenshomeadopt.org), which gave them a better understanding of the adoption process, all of the various options and what life as a parent might be like. They

ended up finding another California-based organization, Chicks in Crisis (www.chick-sincrisis.org), which paired them up with a birth mom.

That's the story of how Pam ended up discussing baby names with a stranger in the back seat of a car in Sacramento, and how Pam and Rod became proud parents. Pam was in the room when Annie was born, and Rod happily introduced Annie on the news the night she was born. They were a part of Annie's creation story from the moment she took her first breath.

“Annie will always know that she's adopted,” Pam says. She has pictures of her birth mother and her biological siblings. Someday, if she decides she wants to meet her birth mom in person, that option is open to her.

But right now, Annie's busy learning Spanish from her bilingual nanny, Ms. Heather. She loves listening to music and going to sporting events with her parents. She's a hockey fanatic—she sleeps with a hockey helmet and puck on her bed. And one day, she might even become a big sister.

But until then, her parents hope that by sharing their story and fundraising for Gift of Adoption Fund, they can help turn a few more creation stories into fairy tales. And they freely offer advice to other couples seeking to adopt: “Ask a lot of questions, and don't be swayed by the handful of adoption ‘horror’ stories that are reported,” Rod says. “Adoption is a wonderful experience. It has its highs and lows, but it's been a miraculous experience for us. We wouldn't be the same without it.” **P**

Liz Kohman is a Minneapolis-based freelance writer and former editor for *Plymouth Magazine*.

The End.

