

**ABOVE: BOB COFFEEN, Katherine's grandfather, holds his new grandchild. The older of the two Husker fans muses that Katherine will better fit her scarlet jumpsuit when it comes time to bring her to her first Nebraska football game. RIGHT: CLETUS HOLDS his 3-week-old daughter in Kim's parents' house after a baby shower.**

## Prenatal check-ups prevent risks

Though Kim Coffeen's story has a happy ending, it may not have been so.

Her doctor Terrence Kolbech said that by not getting prenatal care or delivering the baby in a sterile setting, Kim put herself and her unborn baby in danger.

Most women have about a dozen prenatal check-ups, Kolbech said, but for women who have none, like Kim, the risks are many.

"Death is number one," he said. "They could bleed to death."

Kolbech said Kim also could have developed a condition known as toxemia pre-eclampsia, signaled by elevated blood pressure, swelling of lower extremities and protein in the urine.

If not treated, it can develop into eclampsia, which can lead to a coma or convulsions and seizures in the mother from the 20th week of pregnancy to the second week after birth.

Other pregnancy complications vary from torn female organs to having a miscarriage or breech birth. Kim also could have needed Caesarean section surgery to deliver the baby.

"You can't gauge the risk factor," Kolbech said. "It is risky behavior. Anybody who can avail themselves of medical care should."

Being a teen-age mother puts Kim in the highest risk category, Kolbech said. Though hiding a pregnancy is common for mothers Kim's age, he said, he does not know of any mother — anywhere — who

successfully delivered a baby by herself.

Kim's daughter Katherine is healthy, and Kim has recovered from the anemia that resulted after the extreme blood loss during birth.

"She's pretty lucky, and I think she realizes that," he said. "She's lucky she had a nice, healthy baby."

Kolbech advised young mothers to ask their parents for help. But if turning to parents is not a choice, there are other options.

Kim found the number for Nebraska Children's Home in the blue pages of the Lincoln phone book, which lists several entries under "Pregnancy & Childbirth."

Bobbi Richard, the caseworker from Nebraska Children's Home who came to Kim's residence hall room, said her organization is one of the many offering help for unplanned pregnancies and single mothers.

During pregnancy, the organization offers counseling and options for parenting or adoption. It also can set up temporary housing and medical assistance. It offers Lamaze classes and can arrange individual or group pregnancy counseling.

The organization will arrange either open or private adoption. If parenting is the mother's option, the center has a network of single parents, parenting classes and counseling.

All options, including medical care, are kept confidential. Nebraska Children's Home can be reached at (402) 483-7879.

Bob said he will make it possible for Kim to be a good mother without sacrificing her education or her career.

"Katherine will not be an anchor to her for her getting her ship to dock."

That type of support should be expected out of any family, he said.

"I'm not doing anything any different than any normal parent would do for their child."

Kim's lesson about family is one she wants to teach other young women who might be in her situation. She's even considered speaking to UNL groups about the fear and danger involved in what she did.

She and her doctor agree she could have died during labor. They say she is very lucky that Katherine is perfectly healthy, and that her own health has stabilized.

"I would never go through this again," she said. "I don't think anybody should have to go through anything alone. There's nothing you can't tell your parents."

"Sure, they're going to get frustrated and angry, but at the same time, they're always going to love you no matter what."

And what cloaks itself as bad news may be a blessing in disguise.

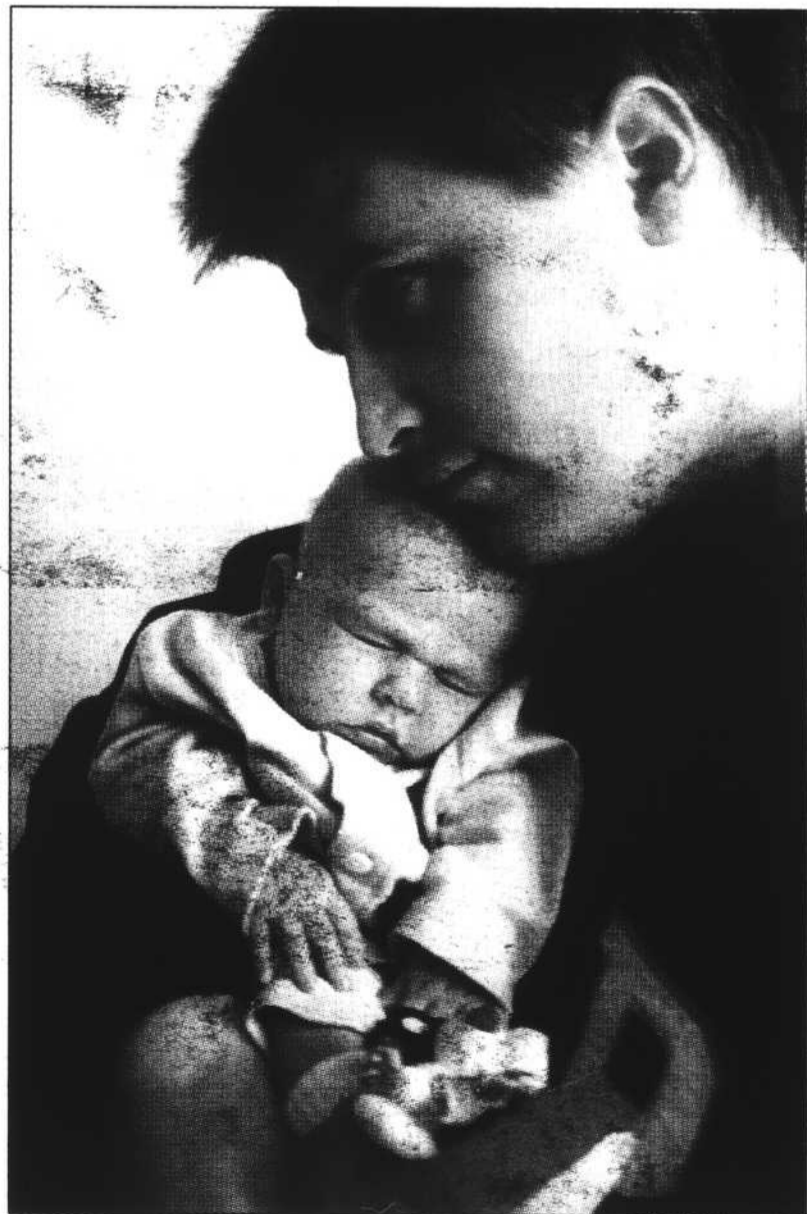
"All this baby can do is bring joy to this family," Bob said.

Katherine brought the family closer together, Kim said, and brought her and Clete closer together.

"There is nothing negative about this baby."

And Kim's outlook as a young mother is that she'll have a strong bond with her daughter. She looked over at the sleeping Katherine and said, in an intense whispering voice, "Oh, God, I love her."

Indeed, as Kim, Clete and their families agree, Katherine Grace is the grace of God.



Photographs  
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