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Dr. John Storment, center, visits with the two new recipient couples of the Gift of Hope for 2007. They are Eric and Beth McCleery, left, and Ryan and Bridgette Baudoin. The couples were introduced Monday morning at a press conference for the program.

Program gives 'Hope'

Acadiana couples to get help with fertility costs

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Two Acadiana couples were given a second chance to start a family Monday as the winners of this year's Gift of Hope, which offers freedom from the financial stress of in vitro fertilization.

Services for the procedure are donated by the Fertility Center of Louisiana, Women's & Children's, and Sheridan Healthcare.

"It can cost a couple between \$10,000 to \$15,000," said Dr. John Storment of Fertility & Women's Health Center of Louisiana. "A lot of people need it but can't afford it, and most health insurance companies won't pay for it."

This year it was difficult to decide one couple. So two were selected, Storment said.

Elizabeth and Eric McCleery of Rayne and Bridgette and Ryan Baudoin of Breaux Bridge were selected from more than 25 applicants.

"It's restored our hope to

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For more information about the Gift of Hope program, visit www.fertilityanswers.com.

know that we might be parents one day," said Eric McCleery.

The couple has tried for the past three years to conceive. A blockage in Elizabeth McCleery's fallopian tubes made it impossible for them to conceive.

After a painful surgery and other fertility treatments, the couple were told that in vitro would be their only option to get pregnant.

The Baudoins knew it would be difficult for them to have a child. Ryan faced a bout of testicular cancer as a teen and in 2001, Bridgette was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome, a condition that inhibits a woman's ability to ovulate.

In 2004, they underwent in vitro fertilization, and



The 2006 Gift of Hope recipient Laura Hughes, left, holds her baby, Hope, while chatting with nurses Julie Firmin, Karen Alleman and Suzanne Thibodaux Monday at a conference for the Gift of Hope.

Bridgette was pregnant. Two weeks later, she lost the baby.

Bridgette Baudoin admitted that the emotional strains of going through in vitro again will be difficult, but worth it.

"The possible reward is too good a risk not to try," she smiled.

Seeing Hope Hughes asleep in mother Laura's arms gave the couples more hope to hold onto. Hope is the daughter of Laura and Terry Hughes, the first couple awarded the Gift of Hope last year.

"Seeing her made it more

real," Bridgette Baudoin said. "That's what we're hoping for."

On Monday, Laura Hughes advised the couples to remain positive during the process.

"Listen to everything they tell you to do. It's all for a reason," she said. "It's right when you think you can't take it anymore, when it's time for your next appointment, and you go in and they tell you that it's all going to be all right."

Her husband Terry's advice as he took his turn to hold the baby: "Just enjoy it," he smiled.