



'Donor deceived'



Photo by Laura Guido

Traci Portugal holds a photo of her late father outside her Woodinville home. Last fall, she discovered through a DNA test that she wasn't biologically related to him and had been conceived using her mother's OB-GYN's sperm.

Woodinville woman working to change state fertility fraud laws

By Laura Guido
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When Woodinville resident Traci Portugal took an over-the-counter DNA test last year, she'd been looking to answer some questions about her health. She couldn't have expected it would also lead to a disturbing discovery about her heritage, a subsequent identity crisis, and later a role in trying to change state laws.

Portugal learned the man who raised her as her father was not biologically related to her, and the man who was had also been her mother's OB-GYN.

"I feel like it was a medical assault on my mother, and I was a result of that assault," Portugal said.

She soon learned her experience wasn't completely unique; others across the country have discovered they were conceived via their doctor's sperm or a sperm donor who lied about who he

was and/or his medical history.

In the '70s, her parents had sought help conceiving from Dr. Gary Vandenberg in San Diego. They were told that sperm from pre-med student donors would be used to "help along" her father's sperm, Portugal said her mother told her. Not only is that an inaccurate portrayal of the conception process, it turned out not to be anonymous pre-med students whose sperm was used in the fertility treatment.

Portugal did not know she had been donor conceived until she took a 23andMe DNA test in 2019. Through the unexpected familial connections that she gleaned from the ancestry site, she eventually traced her parentage back to Vandenberg, the man whose signature appeared on her birth certificate as her mother's attending doctor.

In addition to learning her medical history had

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Clash continues over unclear King County beverage ordinance

By Madeline Coats
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Confusion and misinformation continue to fuel the fire between King County and the Friends of Sammamish Valley (FoSV) regarding the May 26 invalidation of the Adult Beverage Ordinance.

Attorneys for the grass-roots organization claim the invalidation order by the Growth Management Hearing Board reverts the ordinance back to the previous land use codes, creating murky regulations for adult beverage businesses. Meanwhile, King County argues there is no code to enforce until Superior Court makes a decision concerning the county's appeal to the invalidated ordinance.

"Right now, there is no code to enforce," said King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert. "We'd like to have more clarity, which is why

we're going to court."

FoSV Executive Director Serena Glover argues the land use codes for wineries, breweries and distilleries (WBDs) prior to the ordinance "were very, very specific" in the rural area and in the agricultural land. The code "clearly specifies" that adult beverage sales are limited to products produced on-site, she added. She described the county's continued lack of code enforcement as a "wild, wild west situation."

"We have a rule of law for a reason. It keeps us from having anarchy," Glover said. "We have these land use rules for a reason — to protect everybody so that we don't have total mayhem."

Lambert said the county has an agreement with all the adult beverage businesses that they will "not

SEE BEVERAGE ORDINANCE PG. 4

Citizens want dog parks, spray play areas, trails

By Madeline Coats
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Woodinville is one step closer to finally getting a dog park.

The updated Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (PRO) Plan emphasizes overwhelming community support for a dog park and spray play areas from people of all ages. City staff presented the plan to city council during a virtual meeting Tuesday, Nov. 17.

Ultimately, council opted to table the discussion until early 2021. Councilmember Rachel Best-Council suggested that council take some time over winter break to think over more creative and cost-effective options, such as community involvement efforts, and return to discuss them in the new year.

"I would just like a little bit more time to come up with a good plan as opposed to finding money in the budget and throwing it toward parks because I don't think that's a good long-term solution," said Best-Campbell during the meeting.

According to the staff report, PRO Plans are required by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and must be updated every six years to maintain eligibility for recreation funding. The PRO Plan is a component of the Woodinville Comprehensive Plan.

Roxanne Robles, associate planner for the city, said trails, swimming,

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Community

FERTILITY FRAUD FROM PG. 1

been half incorrect for her whole life, Portugal also experienced severe depression and anxiety in the wake of her findings.

She also found that few states offer legal protections for donor fraud, especially for the children who resulted from it. To try and change this, Portugal is partnering with the Washington state-based nonprofit Right to Know.

The organization focuses on advocacy for people who have had what they call a “misattributed parentage event” or MPE, which is usually related to adoption, affairs, one-night stands, rape or assisted fertility.

“When you make this discovery, it’s like a rug has been pulled out from under you and you kind of spiral,” Right to Know co-founder and CEO Kara Rubinstein Deyerein said.

She has drafted legislation that would allow both parent and children to retroactively seek civil action for donor fraud and to institute criminal consequences going forward.

“There really needs to be

consequences for donors who lie,” Rubinstein Deyerein said.

District 1 state Sen. Derek Stanford is working with Right to Know to sponsor a bill regarding fertility fraud to be introduced in the upcoming legislative session.

“I was surprised that are so few options for victims when they discover that these things have been done,” Stanford said.

The bill is still being drafted, he said, but it will be focused on holding doctors and fertility clinics accountable when there is evidence of fraud detected by either the parent or child involved. As the laws stand in Washington and most states, parents who are defrauded have more standing for legal recourse and the children who are born via the donated sperm have hardly any.

Although not the child of assisted fertility herself, Rubinstein Deyerein said that while she was researching legal options for her own MPE, she was “appalled” to learn of the lack of protections to people who are donor conceived.



Traci Portugal struggled with the discovery she made last fall that the man who raised her wasn't her biological father.

She said there are several instances where people who didn't know their genetic history and suffered from health problems that long went undiagnosed because doctors didn't know to test for hereditary conditions from their donor.

Portugal also experienced a lengthy process to receive a diagnosis for problems that she didn't know she is genetically predisposed to.

“It put me at risk, and it's put my children at risk having inaccurate medical

data,” Portugal said.

As it did with Portugal, the discovery of an MPE can commonly have a profound effect on someone's mental health and sense of self that others cannot fully understand, Rubinstein Deyerein said.

To cope, Portugal joined support groups on Facebook for others who are donor conceived. She said its members have been her “grounding.”

“We've kind of created our own sibling group,” she said. “We call ourselves DC

siblings.”

She said the groups better “understand the pain and trauma” she experienced after her discovery. She created the website, donordeceived.org as a way to share information about the issue and share stories like hers and resources.

Right to Know has a resource line at 323-TALK-MPE for those struggling with a discovery and provides help finding genetic family members.

Portugal and Rubinstein Deyerein both emphasized

a desire that people who choose to adopt or conceive using a donor will be honest with their children early on about their genetic origins.

As home DNA-testing kits become more widely available, this kind of information will be easier to find and more discoveries will be made.

“This isn't going anywhere,” Rubinstein Deyerein said. “You can't pretend or hide a person's parentage anymore.”

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