

NEWS**NH NH pols defeat anti-gay marriage**

amendment Legislators decisively vote down a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

FAMILY A real story of artificial

insemination Out couple Diedre Wade and Lisa Portscher tell how they used different fertility techniques to successfully bring daughter Anya Marie into the world.

**LAW Advocates for GLBTs honored by Women's Bar**

Arline Isaacson and Norma Shapiro awarded "President's Special Recognition Award" by one of the nation's oldest and largest attorneys' orgs for women.

CONN Conn.'s civil unions embolden gay marriage cause

GLAD argues for full marriage rights in Superior Court, decision not expected for several months.

**MASS Quincy marriage forum devolves into debate on homosexuality**

Married gay couple takes on opponents who do not believe that homosexuality actually exists.

RI Cranston man fights for 'husband' tomb inscription

CRANSTON, R.I. (Joe Siegel) — A Cranston man is battling a local cemetery over an inscription on his late husband's crypt.

Rick Paolino asked St. Ann's Cemetery to put the word "husband" on the crypt of Justin Paolino, who died last month. The couple were married in Massachusetts one year ago. Paolino wanted to honor the memory of Justin, whose body is stored in a mausoleum.

"I thought that it was significant that we were married for a year and it took me 50 years to find somebody that I could actually marry," Paolino told WJAR/Channel 10. "I just didn't want that to go completely unnoticed forever."

Paolino also attempted to use the word "spouse" and then "beloved" for the inscription, but those were also rejected by officials who explained they were trying to maintain the "dignity" of the cemetery. The Diocese of Providence maintains the Catholic cemetery.

"I said to them, I'm not asking them to recognize gay marriage," Paolino said. "I'm only asking you to recognize the fact that I loved this person."

Paolino said if the diocese doesn't change their decision, he may consider moving his family to a cemetery in Massachusetts.

"It really hurts because I really feel that they've tossed me aside and tossed my feelings aside and my love for a person aside and that person's love for me aside," Paolino added.

MASS AIDS Walk dedicated to Larry

Kessler **BOSTON (staff)** — The AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts (AAC) is dedicating its 6.2-mile AIDS Walk, Boston, "From All Walks of Life," to Larry Kessler, the agency's founder. AAC is introducing "Larry's Team," which will lead the Walk on Sun., June 4 that begins and ends at The Hatch Shell on Boston's Esplanade. AAC is also renaming the 3.5-mile run component of the event to The Larry Kessler Run to honor his lifetime legacy of service, vigilance and social justice.

CONN Judiciary Committee supports gender identity protections

HARTFORD (staff) — The Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut legislature voted 28-8 in support of HB 5597: An Act Concerning Discrimination. This bill would add gender identity and expression to the state's non-discrimination statutes and include the transgender community as a protected class.

The bill now moves to other committees for approval.

HEALTH WILLIAM HENDERSON**A real story of artificial insemination**

Lisa Portscher and Deidre Wade with baby Anya (PHOTO: ERIC HESS)

OUT COUPLE DIEDRE WADE AND LISA PORTSCHER TELL HOW THEY USED DIFFERENT FERTILITY TECHNIQUES TO SUCCESSFULLY BRING DAUGHTER ANYA MARIE INTO THE WORLD

It was a steamy August night, 2004. Diedre Wade made more than a few traffic violations on her way home. Inside her car, she had the heat on full blast. Between her legs was a cup and inside the cup was the sperm donated by a friend who agreed to be the donor-father of the child Wade and her wife, Lisa Portscher, hoped to conceive. The hotter she could keep the sperm, the more viable they would prove to be.

That night, in what the two women call a quickie date, Portscher, using the donated sperm, fertilized one of Wade's eggs and nine months later, in what some might call a quirky twist of fate, after 28 hours of labor, on May 17, 2005, the one-year anniversary of the legalization of gay marriage in Massachusetts, Anya Marie was born.

She's about eight months old today, a Saturday in early January. Inside the Hyde Park home Wade and Portscher share, she sits surrounded by toys, an empty toilet paper roll, an empty tin and her two mothers who take turns telling the story, not just of the birth, but of their

meeting, their marriage, and how in the 21st century, there are any number of ways to start and nurture a family.

GETTING STARTED

Mutual friends introduced the two women, and though neither woman was looking for a relationship having each separately survived a rough break-up, the two swapped e-mail addresses and started swapping the facts of their lives: Wade had wanted a child but her ex-partner had not; Portscher had tried to get pregnant using an anonymous sperm donor but was unable to do so.

"And I thought my ship had sailed," Portscher said. "But that was before I got myself a young wife."

The women had a commitment ceremony on May 25, 2003, legally married on May 24, 2004, honeymooned in Paris, and then started working to conceive.

It's not always so easy to conceive, according to experts working at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Although same-sex couples can marry in Massachusetts, conception still requires the union of a male's sperm and a female's egg.

Fortunately, there are different ways for women to secure the sperm (should old fashioned lovemaking prove, well, unwelcome) including the artificial insemination program offered through

Fenway Community Health as well as numerous sperm banks where women can select the type of man with which they'd best create life.

Factor in that women older than 35 still have a good shot at conceiving but do so with an increased risk of having a child with birth defects — Wade was 35 when they decided to attempt conception — and Anya can be seen as nothing short of a miracle.

Which is why when the first man Wade and Portscher approached didn't work out — "we had thought about using [someone else they knew] but it didn't work out," Wade said — they didn't let that stop them. Enter Steve (not his real name), a young gay man with a healthy lifestyle who was willing to let his genetics create a child without needing parental rights, and it's, again, that steamy August night in 2004 when Anya was conceived.

TRY, TRY AND TRY AGAIN

It took three months of trying before conception occurred, and by trying, the women did just that — once each month, on the day Wade was most fertile, she called Steve for a sample and attempted to conceive. Which means that Anya is the result of three, and only three attempts, to conceive.

"We got lucky," Wade said. "We really lucked out."

And perhaps luck did, in fact, have a hand in ensuring conception took place, but it did not do so solo. Less than 24 hours before conception occurred, Wade had undergone a round of acupuncture through a fertility enhancement program at Pathways to Wellness, a Boston-based provider of holistic health services.

According to Kristen Porter, Pathways to Wellness executive director and faculty member at the New England School of Acupuncture, for many women, adding acupuncture to their infertility treatments has helped them become pregnant. And unlike many fertility drugs, acupuncture has no harmful side effects nor do women need worry about multiple births or ectopic pregnancies, common concerns when undergoing IVF and other infertility treatments.

"The inclusion of acupuncture and yoga along with biomedicine creates a comprehensive fertility treatment plan that addresses all the various and complicated issues that can be present in the patient with infertility," said Porter. "Holistic care provides an adjunctive treatment that brings support and nurturance to the patient in body, mind and spirit. Addressing infertility on all of these levels cultivates a landscape within that can better create and support a healthy pregnancy."

Recent studies led by Dr. Paul C. Magarelli, an infertility doctor at the Reproductive Medicine and Fertility Center in Colorado Springs, CO and an earlier study conducted in 2002 by researchers at the University of Ulm in Germany have shown that acupuncture can enhance the success rate of in vitro fertilization (IVF). These studies indicate that using acupuncture in conjunction with IVF therapy increases the chance that the embryo will be implanted successfully and reduces the chance of miscarriage.

A 2003 Fertility and Sterility article, co-authored by a team of researchers at New York Weill Cornell Medical Center, provided a summary of research that supports acupuncture's potential fertility-boosting benefits including regulating reproductive hormones, increasing blood flow to the uterus, and lowering stress hormones.

And then there's Anya who can be seen as the product not just of a sperm and an egg but as the product of a more-relaxed mother, said Wade, who said that while she can't pinpoint exactly what about the acupuncture treatment made conception more possible, "it made

me feel better, somehow."

"I was calm and just at peace," she said.

IT WORKED!

One missed menstrual cycle, a couple of inconclusive pregnancy tests, and a doctor's visit later and Wade and Portscher had the news — they were about to become parents. Well, not about as in right then, but nine months is hardly a long enough period of time in which to restructure and arrange your life (or lives, as in this case) around that of a baby.

But Wade and Portscher did just that. Portscher was already working from home so knew she'd able to provide some level of constant at-home parenting, but Wade didn't want to miss out on anything, either, so they decided she would leave her job after her maternity leave and look for something that would allow her as much time as possible with their daughter, which she found, at a daycare that allows her to bring Anya to work.

Ask any woman who has had a child and she might tell you that pregnancy isn't what everyone thinks it is. There are the cravings and the morning sickness, that full-feeling all throughout the last trimester, but for Wade, it was the second trimester, watching her body slowly expand and change, feeling the tiny kicks and somersaults taking place inside that were the easiest and most thrilling of the pregnancy. Not enough to consider getting pregnant again — there are those age-related risks to consider, too — but enough to look back at her pregnancy with fondness.

DURING THE PREGNANCY

During the pregnancy, the women attended childbirth lessons for lesbians at ISIS Maternity, a Boston area-based educational resource for pregnant women and their partners, and while they joked that giving birth is giving birth no matter the woman's sexual orientation, they admitted that it was nice to be around other similarly situated couples.

However marriage-friendly Massachusetts may be (or not, depending on whom you ask) for the GLBT community, the legal rights of parenthood haven't quite caught up. Both women are listed on Anya's birth certificate, but they had to cross out the word "father" and replace it with "second parent," an issue that gay rights groups across the country are trying to fix so that birth certificates aren't so heterosexually biased.

And in terms of names or the labeling of things, Wade and Portscher

plan on referring to the donor-father, Steve, as the donor. Anya will know him as the one who gave her mommy's a gift.

"Really, he donated something to help make life," Wade said. "The implication of 'dad' or 'father' indicates a clear-cut relationship, but Steve will have no responsibilities and no rights."

Portscher agreed, adding, "it won't be hard to explain to Anya. Donors are someone who gives a gift, and he gave us the best gift of all."

NEGOTIATING WITH THE FATHER

The legal wrangling and removing of any rights allowed to Steve is ongoing. It may be as simple as signing a few pieces of paper, but the process takes time. Steve, (who was not made available for interview for this article), had indicated to the women that he has no problem signing away his rights. He has visited the baby, doing so once even before she came home from the hospital. They were friends before Anya, and plan on remaining so.

THE HAPPY FAMILY

Anya seems happy, playful and flirty even, winking and laughing and obviously loved and living in a happy home. And her mothers, whether by actual blood or by heart and choice, feel their lives have just been completed.

"You read all of these parenting books and you gear up for the hard stuff," Wade said, "but it hasn't been so hard. Of course, we all just got a really great baby."

And there's Portscher, Wade's rock, the one who missed out on breastfeeding, on the pain of delivery, on demanding the epidural (Wade held out until hour 17), but who is, in no other terms, still as much mother to Anya as Wade.

She shares those 4 a.m. feedings with Wade and on the one occasion when both women were away from the baby — a postponed anniversary dinner that lasted all of 60 minutes — she felt just as out-of-sorts as did Wade about being separated from their child.

"We hope her happiness lasts until she's well into her forties," Portscher said, then added, "or for however long she lives." •

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