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Same-sex hearing to resume in July

They wanted the father to be an attractive, blond-haired, blue-eyed man who stood at least 6 feet, 2 inches tall and was a mathematical genius.

DAVE SOMMERS
Staff Writer

So same-sex partners Denise Juliano and her partner Andrea Troy got a hold of a sperm donor catalog and eventually put in an order with the DNA company CyroBank of California.

Now, five years later, the resulting child, Ashley, is the subject of a landmark custody battle between the girl's biological mother, Juliano, and Troy, who helped raise the child from birth and now wants shared custody.

"I was there during delivery ... and even cut the umbilical cord," Troy told Bucks Judge Alan Rubenstein during Thursday's child custody hearing which lawyers said could help shape new same-sex parent laws in Pennsylvania.

"The (maternity ward) nurses issued both myself and Denise ID bracelets, you know, the type they give parents in the hospital before they can handle their baby," Troy added.

Juliano, during her testimony, argued that she was the child's biological mother and therefore not obligated to allow her former partner to have custody of Ashley more than two days a month.

According to testimony, Juliano and Troy were partnered in about 1993, and decided to have a baby in 1996.

Juliano testified that she, after getting advice from a fertility doctor, flipped through a catalog from a sperm bank, and ordered semen.

Rubenstein will hold a second day of testimony on July 25, after which he could make a decision on the custody request.

Attorneys said Juliano and Troy participated in a marriage ceremony at some point during their relationship, but conceded that Pennsylvania law does not recognize gay marriages.

Although there has been other custody cases involving same sex parents, this reportedly is one of the first involving both an artificial insemination procedure and a partner who helped deliver and raise the child.

Both women have expressed worries that their employer, whom they described as a very conservative, pharmaceutical company in Rahway, could exact some type of hardship on them if officials discovered the relationship. Attorneys however, said it would be illegal under federal to discriminate.

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