

PARENTS TALK BACK

The baby picture that went viral

This was Angela Nicole’s one chance to get pregnant, and she wasn’t hopeful.

She was 40 years old, single, and had spent all her savings trying to conceive.

Angela, who did not want to use her last name, had been trying fertility treatments for more than two years. She had been through five rounds of IVF. In the last one, they weren’t able to extract a single egg to fertilize. All in all, she had taken almost 500 shots. She injected the subcutaneous ones into her stomach herself; her father helped her with the intramuscular shots. There were days when she was getting three or four shots a day.

Out of all those attempts, she had a single viable frozen embryo to be implanted.

Her brother, Shawn, who had been supportive through the ups and downs of her treatment, told her that even though the probability was bad, the possibility was there.

“I knew the probability of it working was getting really bad,” he said. “Like, extremely bad.”

It came down to this one chance. It worked.

Sophia was born four months ago. Angela’s mother was over helping with the newborn when they decided to take a picture to document the journey Angela went through to have her.

She had saved nearly all the syringes and medicine vials from her IVF cycles in a big wicker basket. The day they took the photo, her mother rocked Sophia until she fell asleep, then they laid her gently on a sheet on the ground. Angela arranged the vials and syringes (all fully capped) in a circle around her sleeping baby.

“I wanted her to know how much I really, really wanted her,” she said.

She climbed up on a ladder to take the picture. But when she looked down on the image, she thought, Why don’t I just do a heart? It was her way of saying to her baby, “Hey, I love you.”

She rearranged the needles and took the shot.

Angela, of Troy, Illinois, works as an accountant. She had focused on her career, and in her late 30s, she said she realized time was running out for her to become a mother.

“I waited a long time to find a husband, but I never did,” she said. She thought about what it would mean to be a single parent. She loves her own father dearly and thought about what it would mean to have a child who wouldn’t have one.

“I knew all the bad,” she said. She struggled with all her doubts.

She wanted a baby anyway.

She spent more than \$100,000 on the treatments. She had worked since she was 15 years old and saved diligently, never taking exotic vacations or buying fancy cars.

“I spent my money on what I really wanted,” she said.

The fertility clinic where she did the IVF, the Sher Fertility Institute, contacted her a few months ago to follow up on her pregnancy. She shared the photo she had taken of Sophia surrounded by the remnants of her treatment.

They asked if they could post it on their Facebook page, and she agreed.

The image has now been viewed more than 2 million times, shared and liked and commented upon thousands of times around the world. At a time when more and more women are waiting to have children and relying on fertility treatments to have a baby, the photo touched a nerve.

Shawn, who has worked as a photographer for years, says that people identified with the message in the image — that the photograph is interesting, but the story behind it even more so. All of those needles could have been for nothing. It came down to one chance.

Even after she got pregnant, Angela needed shots to maintain the pregnancy. She started bleeding at six weeks and thought she had lost the baby. Her blood pressure spiked near the end of her pregnancy, and she had to be induced.

“People who go through (IVF) tend to keep it to themselves,” her brother said.

The experience was difficult and emotional, but this photo showcases the miracle.

“It’s worth all the needles and the stress and the waiting and the ups and downs,” she said. She thinks her photo of Sophia spread so far because it got to the heart of the reason people try over and over again.

People ask why she didn’t adopt. She says it was one of the options she considered, but as a single woman in her 40s, it would have been nearly impossible to adopt a newborn. She wanted the entire experience from the very beginning.

Even now, when someone refers to her as a “mom,” she says she’s taken aback for a moment.

“Wait. What? I’m someone’s mom?”

It was a dream for so long, finally realized.

■

Aisha Sultan is a St. Louis-based journalist who studies parenting in the digital age while trying to keep up with her tech-savvy children. Find her on Twitter: @AishaS.



AISHA SULTAN
Parents talk back

Welcome Halloween with fun, DIY front-door decorations

By JENNIFER FORKER
Associated Press

Want to display your Halloween spirit right at the front door?

These nine do-it-yourself projects are simple enough to be done by kids with an adult’s help, and use easy-to-find supplies.

“The door to your house is basically the entrance to Halloween,” says Susan Spencer, editor in chief of Woman’s Day magazine. “It shows off your creativity. (The projects) really have to be easy and fun so they can be done together as a family.”

Just keep Halloween decorating fun and spooky, not truly scary or gory, says Camille Smith, HGTV’s managing editor. “You want it to be family-friendly,” she says. “There’s nothing worse than having a toddler scared.”

New uses for popular symbols

- **Pumpkin Patch:** Turn the front door into a giant, welcoming pumpkin. Cut orange wrapping paper and attach it to the front door. Cut oversize jack-o’-lantern features from sparkly gold wrapping or other paper and attach them to the orange paper with double-sided tape. To accent the door, place pumpkins of various sizes, shapes and colors on the stoop or porch, says Spencer, who also recommends glittering some.
 - **Cat’s Eyes:** Transform a string of orange lights into black cats, and ring them around the front door or windows. Download a template from FamilyFun magazine (familyfunmag.com/printables) and trace the cat-head shape onto black card stock (marking where the eyes are). Cut out several heads and use a hole punch to make the eyes. Insert bulbs from a string of electric lights into the holes. Laminate the black-cat cutouts against weather, or hang the lights indoors so they’re viewable from outside.
 - **Skeleton bones:** Take apart several large plastic skeletons and “frame” the front door with the bones. Use double-sided tape to attach them or wire them together like a garland. Add a string of lights or orange-and-black ribbon, says HGTV’s Smith.
- ## All eyes on you
- **“Nice to Eat You”:** This toothy door is simple but effective. From a sheet of white craft foam, cut a row of teeth that will fit across the top length of your door. Cut two large eyes from yellow craft foam and pupils from black craft foam. Staple the pupils to the eyes. Staple removable-foam mounting squares to the backs of each shape (FamilyFun used two squares for each eye and three near the top of the teeth). Adhere the eyes directly above the doorway and set the teeth so they hang from the inside



Spook-tacular decor

LEFT: A Halloween wreath that does double duty: After October, remove all evidence of Halloween to continue displaying the wreath through Thanksgiving. In the spring, the faux plants may be replaced with living succulents.
Cristina Ferrare via AP

BOTTOM LEFT: “Nice to Eat You.”: Quickly make an amusing Halloween front door with craft foam: Using removable foam-mounting squares, attach pointy white teeth so they hang from inside the door frame and two large, yellow eyes with black pupils mounted above the doorway.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Transform a string of orange lights into black cats and string them around the front door — laminated against bad weather — or hang them indoors.
Alexandra Grablewski/FamilyFun/ Meredith Corp. via AP



- of the frame or attach directly to the door.
- **Eyes Everywhere:** Cut pupils out of black felt and attach to white Styrofoam half-spheres (available at craft stores and online). Use removable tape to stick spheres to the front door, according to this Woman’s Day craft. Make smaller “eyes,” attach them to skewers and stake them into potted greenery around the door.
 - **Monstrous Wreath:** FamilyFun says this wreath “will keep an eye (or 10) on your kids.” Cut out the flat center from a plain, white paper plate. Paint the remaining outer piece of the plate and let dry. Cut eight to 10 teeth from the discarded center piece; glue the teeth to hang from the inside top of the ring into the open center. Glue large and small white pom-poms (or cotton balls) onto the plate, then glue black paper circles for pupils on each

- pom-pom. Cut out and glue on two yellow paper horns at the “head” of the plate.
- **Googly-Eyed Wreath:** Use a hot-glue gun to cover a white foam wreath with pingpong balls, building up layers so the wreath is fully covered. (It takes 2 to 3 bags of pingpong balls, bought online or at a sports store, says HGTV’s Smith.) Attach a small or large googly eye to each white ball. Attach the wreath to the front door with a metal or plastic hanger (rather than wrapping it in ribbon) to keep the wreath intact. “If you store it flat (so the balls don’t dent), it never goes bad,” says Smith.
- ## Wreaths that do double duty
- **Halloween Terra Cotta Pot Wreath:** Cristina Ferrare, co-host of Hallmark Channel’s “Home and Family,” decorated a burlap-

- and-moss-covered wreath with tiny pots filled with faux succulents before adding the telltale Halloween items: skulls, spiders and glittery black branches. Supplies may be found at craft and online stores, and any wreath that can hold the heft will work. When Halloween’s over, remove the spooky stuff and you have a pretty fall wreath for Thanksgiving. In the spring, the faux plants may be replaced with living succulents.
- **Putka Pod Wreath:** This wreath is covered with diminutive dried seed pods, called putka pods, that resemble tiny pumpkins. They are sold online and at craft stores. Smith hangs her wreath with a wide burlap ribbon for a rustic look that easily transitions into Thanksgiving. The dried pods are delicate but don’t deteriorate, so this wreath, if stored carefully, may be displayed for years, says Smith.

OUT OF THE VAULT

Elvis Presley autograph signing devolves into fisticuffs

A service station in Memphis, Tennessee, erupted into a brawl on Oct. 18, 1956, and when the dust settled Elvis Presley was cleared of disorderly conduct charges while two station employees were fined for starting the fight.

Presley, 21, was in his hometown briefly between tours and had stopped by the station of Ed Hopper to have him check the gas tank of his Lincoln Continental Mark II for leaks. While Presley waited, a crowd gathered at the station and he began signing



RENEE STRUTHERS
Out of the vault

autographs. The trouble started when the crowd began blocking traffic to the station, and Hopper asked Presley to move on so the station could get back to regular business. “I asked him three times to move, in a nice way,” said Hopper, 42.

Presley agreed to move his car, but dawdled to sign just a few more autographs.

Hopper, irate at the delay (and apparently not impressed by Presley’s celebrity status), leaned into the car and slapped Presley on the back of the head, snapping, “I said to move on.”

According to witness Harvey Huff, the 6-foot 1-inch, 185-pound Presley jumped out of the car and landed a right cross on the smaller Hopper, leaving a gash near his left eye. Hopper then allegedly tried to pull a pocket knife on Presley. A policeman and another bystander broke up the fight, but station attendant Aubrey Brown waded into the fray and

took a swing at Presley, who grazed Brown with another right.

All three men appeared in court the next morning, Hopper sporting a beaut of a black eye. Judge Sam Friedman fined Hopper \$25 and Brown \$15 for assault and battery, and Presley was cleared of disorderly conduct charges.

■

Renee Struthers is the Community Records Editor for the East Oregonian. See the complete collection of Out of the Vault columns at eovault.blogspot.com

ODDS & ENDS

Overdue books returned to Oregon library, 52 years later

PORTLAND (AP) — Portland State University librarians in Oregon finally got their hands on two overdue books — a half century after they were checked out.

The Oregonian reports that someone put two books checked out in 1963 into a book drop, accompanied by an anonymous, handwritten note.

University librarian Joan Petit says the books are so old that staff members don’t know what to do with them. In the time since they were borrowed for a high-school speech class, card catalogs have been digitized and classification methods have changed.

But the librarians, who no longer charge late fees, say they are thankful that someone returned “Basic Principles of Speech” and “Preface to Critical Reading.”

The anonymous note acknowledges that the books are “outdated — yes — but I’ll let you decide their fate now.”

Massachusetts College honors retired professor with 17 mph speed limit

AMHERST, Mass. (AP) — A Massachusetts college has changed all the speed limit signs on campus to honor a retired mathematics professor who spent his career fascinated by the number 17.

The speed limit change from 15 mph to 17 mph at Hampshire College was made at the request of the professor, David Kelly. He didn’t want a retirement party when he stepped down after 45 years on the faculty at the college in Amherst.

Kelly knows countless facts about 17, the seventh prime number. He says it has had broad applications in mathematics and other disciplines. There are many fun facts about 17, including that there are 17 columns on the long side of the Parthenon in Greece.

Kelly says the tribute “captures Hampshire’s uniqueness.”

Unexpected visitor: Woman finds bear inside apartment

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP) — A North Carolina woman says she entered her daughter’s apartment and found a bear, who had entered by opening an unlocked door, roaming through the home.

Asheville Fire Department spokeswoman Kelley Klope told local news outlets the mother called emergency personnel Tuesday night after spotting the bear eating some pet food.

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission biologist Mike Carraway says the bear smelled dog food right inside the door and was able to get in through the door by pulling down on the unlocked handle.

Klope says crews arrived and hit on the ceiling to scare the bear, which then left unharmed.

Klope says all that was left in the wake of the bear’s visit was a broken flowerpot and blind.