

## STATE &amp; REGION

## By chance, Oregon woman's blood cells could save a life

BY TOM HALLMAN JR.  
The Oregonian

A woman dying of a rare form of blood cancer has a chance at life because of what happened in January after a letter arrived at a West Linn home, addressed to someone who no longer lived there.

It is a journey full of flukes, long odds and what-ifs, one that began four years ago at Oregon State University when Natalie Maestretti, then a student, happened to be walking through the Memorial Union Quad, the heart of the campus. She noticed people talking with students.

She stopped and heard these people asking students if they'd be potential bone marrow and blood donors. She decided she would. She signed up. Someone swabbed the inside of her mouth to gather her cells, and she was on her way in two minutes.

She graduated, and her parents later sold the family home in West Linn. Now 24, Maestretti had moved to Portland to work as a recruiter for a health care company when the letter, addressed to her, arrived at her old family home. The new homeowner wasn't sure what to do with it. She could toss it out, but contacted Maestretti's parents to make sure she got it. When she opened it, Maestretti found a letter and sheet of instructions that made

her remember that stop on the Oregon State Quad.

The letter said Maestretti was a perfect match for a woman in her 30s who was dying. Was she still interested in donating her blood cells to save this woman's life?

"Of course," she said. "It was surreal. It's crazy to think how interconnected we are in this world."

#### A registry of 11 million donors

The people who had come to OSU in 2017 were affiliated with DKMS, a nonprofit bone marrow donor center based in Germany, with offices in the United States and cities around the world.

Each year, agency recruiters visit college campuses to educate and ask young people to register with DKMS, said Koren Karlovic, a Portland-based recruiter whose territory is college campuses west of the Mississippi River. Donors are eligible to be on the list at 18. And since donors stay on the list until they are 61, she said, college students are critical as they remain potential candidates for decades.

"Last year was tough for us," she said. "All the college campuses were closed because of COVID-19. We are hoping to get back as soon as they reopen."

A patient's doctor, she said, first tries standard medical procedures, chemotherapy and radiation. If that doesn't work, a

stem cell or bone marrow transplant is the only option. A doctor first looks within the patient's family, specifically, a sibling with the same genetic coding.

"About 25% of the time they find a match," she said. "When they don't, they have to look in the international pool of donors and they come to us from around the world."

The donor's cells must be a match with the patient's immune system, or the new cells will be rejected, she said. A computer system analyzes all 11 million potential donors,

looking for protein markers in the donor that match, or closely match, markers in the patient.

The registry, when contacted, begins looking through all donors, seeking the closest possible match.

"It truly is a needle in a haystack," she said. "There is less than a 4% chance a donor will ever be contacted."

Natalie Maestretti was a match.

#### 'It was so easy'

Maestretti underwent an extensive physical to make sure

she was healthy while DKMS officials waited to hear from the patient's doctor, who was working to get his patient, battling acute myeloid leukemia, in remission long enough to receive the new cells.

In late February — about a month after the letter arrived at her former family home in West Linn — Maestretti went to the hospital for a procedure called apheresis. IV lines were attached to both arms. One line extracted blood and sent it to a machine to separate the red blood cells, and the other

line returned it to her body.

"It was so easy," she said. "It took almost nine hours. I had a choice to read or watch TV. I watched the whole first season of 'The Amazing Race.'"

Maestretti knows only that the woman who received her cells is 32 years old and lives somewhere in the United States. Without those cells, the woman would die. The patient's doctor will know by June if the cells were accepted by the patient's body.

"I'd love to meet her," said Maestretti.

## STATE BRIEFING

#### Lawmaker accused of misconduct out as chair

An Oregon state representative has volunteered to step down as a committee chair after being accused of misconduct by another lawmaker.

Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie, was accused of sexually harassing a colleague Monday. Witt temporarily removed himself as leader of the House Natural Resources panel. He said he believes he will be exonerated but would not function as committee chair until an investigation was finished.

The bipartisan House Committee on Conduct on Friday had declined an investigator's recommendation that the panel require Witt to step down.

In a statement, House Republican Leader Christine Drazan slammed the conduct panel's decision not to order Witt to give up his committee leadership position.

"Allowing the accused to choose the actions they will voluntarily take to protect their victim is not how this process should work," Drazan said.

#### OHSU to pay \$2,000-plus per hour for investigation

Investigators, including former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, will be paid as much as \$2,000 per hour or more to look into claims of sexual harassment, racism, discrimination and retaliation at Oregon Health & Science University.

OHSU announced it had hired Holder and his law firm, Covington & Burling, late last month.

The announcement came about a month after an employee filed a federal lawsuit against a doctor at OHSU for sexual assault — and against the institution itself, claiming that employees had not followed Title IX reporting protocol.

Another lawsuit followed, by a woman against an OHSU anesthesiology resident alleging sexual battery, false imprisonment and infliction of emotional distress.

In a statement earlier this month, OHSU leaders said litigation against the institution and its employees was only one reason for the investigation — the broader purpose is to examine the teaching hospital's culture as a whole.

"This investigation will take a deep dive on these matters and I firmly believe it's what we need to uncover the root causes and make the appropriate cultural changes," OHSU Board Chair Wayne Monfries said during a board of directors meeting Friday.

According to the contract between Covington & Burling and OHSU obtained by OPB, Holder's hourly rate is \$2,295. The contract states that the firm agreed to discount its hourly rates by 10% for OHSU.

"We will design a survivor-centered, trauma-informed investigative work-plan based on our professional judgment and provide to the University our independent findings and recommendations once we have reached them," the contract, signed by Holder, states.

OHSU leaders say campus community members will be able to share their experiences and observations with investigators.

OHSU said it expects the investigation to take at least six months.

— Bulletin wire reports

## Ask a Legal Professional

### ESTATE PLANNING



Lindsay Gardner  
Attorney at Law

**Question:** I was the personal representative for my father's estate and found probate very stressful. How can I make sure my own children don't have to probate my estate after I die?

**Answer:** Oregon law provides a variety of estate planning options that will enable your children to avoid probating your estate. One of the most common options is the use of a revocable trust (i.e. a living trust). A revocable trust operates similar to a will after you die, because it names who is given your remaining property and in what shares. However, unlike a will, these distributions are made by your trustee outside of probate. A revocable trust can own almost any type of property, including real property, investment accounts, and bank accounts. Other options for avoiding probate include owning real estate with your spouse or another person by right of survivorship, recording a transfer on death deed for real estate, and/or naming beneficiaries to your investment accounts, bank accounts, and/or retirement accounts. You should work with an experienced estate planning attorney in order to determine what options best meet your goals.

#### BRYANT, LOVLIE & JARVIS, P.C.

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### LONG-TERM CARE



Will Dennis  
Attorney at Law

**Question:** If my spouse needs long-term care such as assisted living, adult foster care or memory care which is going to be a burden on me, how much money can I keep and qualify my spouse for Medicaid long-term care benefits?

**Answer:** First, the spouse seeking Medicaid benefits can only have \$2,000.00 to their name. The well spouse may keep \$25,728 at a minimum and \$128,640 as a maximum ("CSRA - Community Spouse Resource Allowance"). However, there are other benefits to the well spouse such as exempting the value of your home up to \$595,000.00 and exempting one vehicle. In many cases there are strategies, which the well spouse may take advantage of, to protect additional assets over and above the maximum CSRA. I provide a no-charge review to help you get headed in the right direction.

#### WILL DENNIS Attorney at Law LLC

"Protecting Seniors and Their Families  
from the High Cost of Long-Term Care"

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Ask a Legal Professional • Leanna Williams  
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Or mail: P.O. Box 6020, Bend, OR 97708

### REAL ESTATE



Craig Edwards  
Attorney at Law

**Question:** A large part of my neighbor's garden is located on my property. I've never objected because my neighbor gives me lots of fresh vegetables! Is it possible for him to get the legal title to this area of my property if I continue to allow him to use it?

**Answer:** Yes, but only if he can show that he (and/or his predecessors) have used your property for a total of at least 10 years, continuously, openly, exclusively, and without the consent of you or your predecessors. He and his predecessors must have honestly believed that they owned the property when their use first began, and at all times during the following 10 years. If the garden has encroached for fewer than 10 years, a letter alerting him to the encroachment, and giving him permission to use it, should protect you. Consult a real estate attorney to analyze and advise about your specific rights and options.

#### FRANCIS HANSEN & MARTIN, L.L.P.

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