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## LOCAL

### Free sperm alternative to spermbank

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Donating sperm to lesbian couples, single lesbians, and single heterosexual women who want children as an alternative to expensive sperm banks was the topic of a Wednesday evening forum sponsored by the Men's Resource Connection at the Bangs Community Center in Amherst.

Speakers at the discussion included donors, both past and present, and recipients who shared their experiences. In order to protect individuals' privacy, speakers' names were withheld.

Early on, the group discussed different methods of sperm donation. According to the speakers, the most controversial method of sperm donation involves a "known donor." Usually, in this scenario the man is known to the couple and the child from the beginning. This method, according to speakers, brings up questions about the role of the sperm donor in the development of the child.

One of the woman speakers who has used this method said, "I wanted a known donor. . . I'm single, I'm a lesbian, any child of mine would have a couple of wrinkles [to deal with] and I didn't want to complicate that any further."

A man who has been a known donor said he felt comfortable with the process. "I had this investment in seeing my genetic material go out there. My way of taking responsibility for my sperm was becoming a known donor."

A speaker explained there are two ways to go about becoming an unknown donor: The first is to work through a go-between. In this method, when the recipient is ready for fertilization, the middle-person contacts the donor who prepares the semen, then the middle-person transports it to the recipient without the two ever meeting.

He said another way to become an unknown donor is via a sperm bank. This is an extremely expensive option, which limits its usability to those who can afford it, he said. Some sperm banks, according to the speaker, release the name of the donor to the recipient when the child reaches the age of 18.

"My first thought from the whole thing was, 'Wow, what a great opportunity to open this up to these people,'" said one man who is considering becoming a donor but is having second thoughts. "I love the idea [of donating]. I think it is a great idea. I just don't want to open up a can of worms that I can't handle. . . I really still feel confused about it."

One lesbian woman who has been trying to conceive said, "It was a very hard situation. . . every month when you get your period and you are not pregnant, it is very devastating." She continued to describe her experience, "It is a lot harder than you think. . . you really have to think about all of the issues and how they will impact on you. . . One of the most important things is to trust."

A group spokesperson said anyone interested in receiving more information or becoming a donor can contact the Men's Resource Connection at 201 North Valley Road, Pelham, MA 01002 or by phone at 253-7693.