

CANCER

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chronicle her journey, she explained how the doctor combed through her hair to see how chemotherapy might affect it. He also belittled her request to undergo fertility preservation, or harvesting of her eggs before starting chemotherapy.

She and her husband wanted children someday. The doctor told her she probably shouldn't be concerned with family planning at the time.

After that, she connected with Dr. Andrea Cercek at the renowned Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Center in New York City. In her blog, Ellingson called Dr. Cercek "my saving grace."

Tough conversations

The dramatic rise in colorectal cancer in young adults has prompted some of the nation's premiere cancer centers, including MSK and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, to set up specialized programs. Their "young-onset" colorectal cancer centers focus specifically on diagnosing, treating and researching patients under age 50.

Last year, the American Cancer Society approved new recommendations for colorectal screening, in light of the disease trending younger. It said screening for people at average risk should begin at age 45, instead of the



Photos by Ann Arbor Miller / The Forum

Above, top: Eric and Pat Monson reflect on the life and death of daughter Rachel Ellingson during an interview at their south Fargo home on Thursday, April 4. Rachel was just 36 when she died of colorectal cancer this year. Above: Rachel Ellingson's life and death inspired her family to raise awareness about the rise of colorectal cancer among young adults. A Dakota Medical Foundation fund called "Live Like Rach" has been established to support that effort.

previous recommendation of age 50.

Even so, that guideline wouldn't have saved Rachel Ellingson. That means people need to pay attention to their bodies, and tell a parent, a friend or a doctor what they're experiencing, Pat Monson said.

Her husband said those

are not easy conversations for people not used to talking about bodily functions.

"For the Scandanavian-German combination here, this is a little bit too much out in the open. But I think it's necessary to bring attention to both the medical community and individuals," Eric Monson

said.

Their dream wedding

The campaign is called "Live Like Rach" because her daughter always "went big" in life, Pat Monson said.

Even after the difficult cancer diagnosis and surgeries and treatments that followed, Ellingson and husband Daniel Dean pulled off their dream wedding in New Orleans.

In a traditional French Quarter "second line" parade, a brass band led the couple and their guests from the wedding ceremony to the reception venue. People were standing on the sidewalks and hanging off balconies, taking pictures, Monson said.

Ellingson was always up for an adventure, whether it was a day trip or traveling to another country, wrote her good friend Christina Xenides in a "Tribute to Rachie" after her death.

"She wasn't just a person, she was a force," Monson said.

Now, Monson is on a mission to compel others to pay attention to the signs of colorectal cancer, so they don't suffer the same fate as her daughter.

"There are ways to beat this, and we're going to get there," she said.

Anyone interested in donating to the fund or learning more about it can call 701-271-0263 or visit <https://impactgiveback.org/app/#/charity/1088>.

Readers can reach Robin Huebner at rhuebner@forumcomm.com. Huebner is also a reporter on WDAY-TV.



Forum photo by Darren Gibbins

North Dakota Capitol in Bismarck.

House sends North Dakota oil tax fix to Burgum

By John Hageman
Forum News Service

BISMARCK — North Dakota House lawmakers unanimously approved a bill repaying some funds that state officials have said were shorted Friday, April 5.

The House's approval of Senate Bill 2362 came the same week senators passed the legislation. It was prompted by news that three constitutional funds were shorted about \$262 million over roughly the past decade, meaning money flowed to other government buckets.

State officials have blamed "ambiguous" language in state law governing oil tax allocations. At issue is the state's share of oil extraction tax money generated by activity on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

The Common Schools Trust Fund, which supplements state aid to schools, would receive \$64.4 million in earnings from the state's oil tax piggy bank known as the Legacy Fund under the bill. And allocations to the Resources

Trust Fund, which finances water infrastructure projects and energy conservation programs, would be bumped up to refill the pot over time.

The bill would also clarify state law on future oil tax distributions.

The bill doesn't address repaying the Foundation Aid Stabilization Fund, which acts as a safety net for education funding, because doing so would amount to a "shell game," Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner, R-Dickinson, previously said.

The House approved the bill in a 85-0 vote with little discussion, sending it to Gov. Doug Burgum. A month ago, his spokesman said "if it's determined that funds should have been allocated to certain constitutional funds, the governor would support restoring those affected constitutional funds as soon as possible."

Burgum had no additional comment on the issue Friday.

Call Hageman at (701) 255-5607 or send email to jhageman@forumcomm.com

Minnesota sets campaign on distracted drivers

ST. PAUL — Over 300 Minnesota law enforcement agencies will participate in a campaign against distracted driving April 8-30, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic

Safety said.

Minnesota is seeing a disturbing trend of distracted driving in the past six years. With the amount of texting citations going up year after year, there was a 30 percent increase from 2017 to 2018 with 9,545 citations issued.

Distracted driving contributes to one in five

crashes in Minnesota, the DPS said, and an average 45 people have been killed per year from 2014-2018.

Minnesota law states that no person may operate a motor vehicle while reading or sending texts or emails, or accessing the web while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic. This includes when

stopped at stop lights or stop signs.

First offenses start at \$50 with subsequent offenses costing \$275

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