

# A vocation to help survivors preserve fertility

AT AGE 29, JOYCE REINECKE WAS DIAGNOSED with leiomyosarcoma, a type of tumor that develops in soft tissue. She was on a business trip for her law firm when she became ill. She was hospitalized and, during emergency surgery, doctors found and removed four tumors from her abdomen. As a young married woman, Joyce was shocked to learn that some of the options for treating the cancer might leave her unable to bear children.

“Nobody talked to me about fertility preservation,” she recalls. “It was only mentioned by a medical fellow the day before I left the hospital.” She discovered that her experience was not unusual. Research has shown that many survivors do not recall discussing fertility preservation with their oncologist or are not routinely referred for fertility preservation services.

Joyce, a New York state native, was living in Seattle when she was diagnosed. She chose to undergo in vitro



Joyce Reinecke, JD, with her husband and twin daughters

## Community partner: The Alliance for Fertility Preservation

The goal of the Alliance for Fertility Preservation is “to help alleviate one of the most distressing life-altering consequences of cancer treatment—infertility.” Since it was founded in 2012, the organization’s exclusive focus has been on fertility preservation for cancer patients.

The Alliance’s website ([www.allianceforfertilitypreservation.org](http://www.allianceforfertilitypreservation.org)) offers information on reproductive health and choices, including fertility risk from cancer treatment, fertility testing after treatment, and pretreatment fertility preservation options for women and men. The site also includes patient stories, research publications, and resources for professional education and advocacy.

The site’s Fertility Scout™ is a free tool that survivors can use to find fertility preservation services by geographic area. According to the site, all of the listed providers “understand the urgent timeline facing . . . [recently-diagnosed] patients.” The providers have agreed to designate one “fertility preservation contact” to handle referrals for their clinic and to get in touch with patients directly within 48 hours to schedule an appointment. The Fertility Scout tool is one of Joyce’s proudest accomplishments as Director of the Alliance.

fertilization and freeze embryos for the future. She and her husband travelled to Cornell University for the procedure, and they are now the parents of twin girls.

As a result of her experiences, Joyce found a passion for informing survivors about their options for preserving fertility and helping them connect with services. Since 2014 she has been the Executive Director of the Alliance for Fertility Preservation (AFP), a charitable foundation created by professionals with expertise in all aspects of fertility preservation for cancer survivors (see sidebar). Before joining the AFP as its Director, she was a cancer and fertility adviser for the LIVESTRONG Foundation and served as the Vice President of Programs for Fertile Hope.