

Looking For Blood Relatives

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(CBS) Imagine having a half-sibling you never knew existed. That's a strong possibility for kids conceived via sperm donation.

Sperm donors often supply multiple donations to women and couples who are hoping to start a family. Now, these kids can turn to the Internet for a chance at finding extended family they have never known.

CBS News correspondent Hattie Kauffman reports for *The Early Show*.

At just 14 years old, Ryan Kramer is a college engineering student. Despite his high I.Q., there's a puzzle he can't solve: The identity of his father.

"I know he's 6 feet tall," Ryan says, "I know he has brown eyes and blond hair. I know he was an engineering student."

Ryan's mother conceived via artificial insemination. Early on, she explained to Ryan that his father was an anonymous sperm donor, and promised to help him research his background if and when he was ready.

"I felt it was my job as his mother," Wendy Kramer says, "I brought him into the world with this set of circumstances, and I felt like it was my responsibility, then, to aid him however he wanted to be aided in his curiosities."

Since the donor had requested 100 percent anonymity, Ryan may never discover his identity. But there are other clues to his paternal side in the form of half-siblings, other offspring of Ryan's donor.

Asked if he has any idea as to how many others there are, Ryan says, "We do have some idea that we found out inadvertently. We know there are at least 9 and a maximum of somewhere in the area of 15."

So Ryan could have relatives out there.

"I probably -- definitely do," Ryan says. His mother interrupts, saying, "He does." Ryan adds, "Somewhere."

Sperm donors typically provide multiple samples over many months or even years. Until now, there had been no opportunity for offspring of a particular donor to make contact. So Wendy and Ryan Kramer started a Web site: donorsiblingregistry.com.

"People only sign up if they're willing to be found," Wendy Kramer explains. "We don't want to invade anyone's privacy. We want people who want to match up with each other."

The Web site is working. More than 4,000 families are registered and already more than 600 have found donor relatives, like 16-year-old Rebecca and her twin sister, Erin. They recently made an amazing discovery: 17-year-old Tyler and his 11-year-old sister, Mckenzie, share their DNA. The kids live just an hour away from each other. Their mothers had been artificially inseminated by the same sperm donor at a local clinic.

What was it like the first time they met?

"It was nerve-wracking," Erin Baldwin says. "It was, like, 'OK. Well, they're not going to like us.' "

But they all say they felt right away they were family.

Rebecca Baldwin explains, "We stayed two hours the first time we met each other at lunch. And talked forever."

They've had several get-togethers since then, recently sharing a ski trip.

Tina Gibson remembers, with a laugh: "At one point in the ski trip, we're waiting and waiting and waiting, they're poking each other with poles and Tyler finally turned around to Becca and said, 'You are so annoying; you're just like my sister.' And she goes, 'I *am* your sister.' "

But not everyone thinks it's a great idea.

Dr. Jamie Grifo says, "If you know you have a half-sibling out there, you probably have an idealized view of who that person is and

if (that expectation is) not met, that can be disappointing."

This leading fertility expert says that even if you make a match, that doesn't necessarily mean you'll find what you're looking for.

"Clearly, people will come to this with different levels of expectations, and that has to be discussed," Dr. Grifo says. "Otherwise, somebody is going to be disappointed."

Ryan Kramer knows this disappointment all too well. He discovered he has two half-siblings, but later learned their mother had never told them they were donor conceived. So Ryan will not be able to meet them.

"There's just a burning curiosity within me that I think will never go away as long as I live," Ryan says. "Even if it doesn't happen for me, knowing that I've helped it happen for so many other people is a reward on its own."

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