

## Internet connects "siblings" born from sperm donations

(Ally Donnelly, NECN) - The government doesn't require reports on the number of infants born from sperm donation, but experts put the number as high as tens of thousands per year. For families who choose anonymous sperm donation, one sample can be divided into several samples distributed around the country. With many different mothers, come many different children, and now the internet is being used to connect them. Terri Jacobson is thrilled to be vacationing with so many kids. It was such a struggle for she and her husband Eric to have children of their own. We could either adopt children or go with donor insemination and I really wanted the feeling of being pregnant. It was nearly 15 years ago, when the Marietta, Georgia couple decided to go to a sperm bank -- and set about the process of selecting a donor. Terri: it felt like shopping, it did...laugh They clicked through thousands of profiles of men who could potentially, biologically, father their future children. Terri: we looked for brown hair, curly hair, wavy hair Eric: neither of us are athletic or musical, so we liked that... They settled on donor 1096. Six feet tall, Jewish, college educated, whose interests ranged from river rafting and rock climbing to beating a conga drum. Soon after, the Jacobson's learned they were pregnant with twins...and 9 months later, Jonah and Hilite were born. Fast forward several years. Terri was immersed in a life of two young children, but still... Terri: "as the kids grew, I was....intrigued." She had heard about a website -- donor sibling registry dot org. It doesn't reveal the \*sperm donor's identity, but it's a matching site...Terri could try and find out if 1096 fathered \*other children. She created a post and sure enough, in time, another woman answered back. Terri: "I was like, Oh my God! I can't believe this, I can't believe this, it's like incredible, there's a match!" The California woman had a daughter just a bit older than Jonah and Hilite -- \*also using sperm donor 1096. That one mother became two then three then four then five mothers...donor 1096 has fathered 10 children....that they know about. Jim: "we wanted him to think, to know, that there were other kids out there like him and they were all special and connected." Laurie and Jim Bogdon are from Sudbury, Massachusetts. Their 13-year-old son Jesse was born using donor 1096. Jessie became intrigued by the thought of does he have other brothers and sisters? As with the other parents, they were told by \*their sperm bank that 1096's sperm could be used to father a \*total of 10 live births. They wonder if there could be more out there, but say seeing their son meet 9 half brothers and sisters has been incredible. A first, we looked and I think they looked for physical characteristics etc., but it was literally a matter of minutes and they started bonding. Jayme and Jesse Clapoff were born within six weeks of the other kids to single mother Janis from Santa Barbara, California. They call themselves "the sibs" and the recent water fights and skateboarding at Pilgrim Cottages in Chatham, Massachusetts is their first real family reunion. The children all have the same coloring and the parents says they can see some similar physical traits, but the kids insist its their habits that make them dead ringers for relatives. The kids joke and laugh easily, but it doesn't mean there haven't been real issues in coming together. Eric Jacobson struggled, questioning whether he would still be seen as his children's father. The parents say the evolving definition of a nuclear family has certainly eased the transition for the kids and they say keeping them informed -- of how they came to be -- has helped normalize the situation. And, already, they say, they are planning \*next year's family reunion. The children do not know who donor 1096 is. Some say they're curious to meet him, others aren't interested. If you'd like to learn more about the matching site, log on to <a href="http://www.donorsiblingregistry.com" target="\_blank">www.donorsiblingregistry.com</a>

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