

Website Tracks Sperm-Donor Dads

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By Norma Greenaway. CanWest News Service.

American youngster Ryan Kramer's frustration over gaps in his biological history led to the founding 4 years ago of an informal Internet registry aimed at matching half-siblings born from anonymous sperm donors. Last week, Ryan Kramer, 14, and his mother Wendy Kramer of Colorado celebrated the 500th match on their website of a donor offspring and their half-sibling. Their joy was incomplete, however, because Ryan Kramer has yet to be in touch with any half-siblings even though he knows he has at least two.

More than 3,000 individuals and families hoping to find a match have posted their information on the site, including things such as the names of clinics and doctors who did the insemination and, if one is available, the ID number of the anonymous donor. Among them are 25 Canadians who report they were conceived with donor sperm at clinics or doctor's offices in Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax. There have been no Canadian matches so far, but Wendy Kramer says she's optimistic there will be some once more people hear about DonorSiblingRegistry.com.

The site took off in the United States after Kramer, who is divorced, and her son appeared on TV's Oprah. Sadly, she says, it produced new frustration for Ryan. A woman wrote an e-mail immediately after seeing Ryan on television saying she was sure she had given birth to two girls using sperm from the same anonymous donor as Wendy at California Cryobank. She said she knew it as soon as she saw Ryan's face on television. On top of that, the sperm donor number - 1058 - was a match. "That was on Ryan's 13th birthday on May 22, 2003. He was beside himself. We were jumping up and down. The half sisters were 7 and 10 at the time."

A day later, the celebrations ended. The woman, whose family lives on the U.S. East Coast, wrote to tell Ryan he could not meet his half sisters because she and her husband don't plan to tell their children they are products of donor insemination. "It's very, very upsetting for my son," Kramer says. "It's been a hard thing for him to go forward with, knowing these girls are there, and that they don't know he exists." Kramer says she hopes the girls' parents will change their minds over time, but that neither she nor her son will push them. Still, she can't help wondering why the woman wrote in the first place. "I think maybe she was swept away by the moment," Kramer says.

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