

Home > Mobile News > Editorials & Opinion News > ITTO: Lost Siblings Connect Online, Shed Light on Fertility Industry

ITTO: Lost Siblings Connect Online, Shed Light on Fertility Industry



BY MARGARET ROCK | WED OCT 05, 2011 4:37 PM

A generation of children conceived using sperm donors is reaching maturity and turning to an Internet website to find extended family, complete with dozens of half-siblings in some cases, as well as their long-lost fathers.

2 3 0

Like

Top News

Steve Jobs Dies at 56

Google Holds Start-Up Contest in Egypt

Apple Cuts Price of iPhones to Boost Market Share

Amazon, Apple Accused of Price-Fixing E-Books

Taliban Shuts Down Cell Service in Afghanistan

More News >

Is This Thing On?, or ITTO, is our Wednesday column showing how everyday people use technology in unexpected ways.

Donor families' growing reliance on Internet searches to find other offspring from the same donor is shining a light on the long-unregulated infertility industry and prompting families and consumer advocates to push for changes.

No one knows how many children are born in this country each year using sperm donors, because mothers of donor children are only asked to voluntarily report a child's birth to the sperm bank, and only 20 to 30 percent do so. Some estimates put the number at 30,000 to 60,000, perhaps more, according to the Donor Sibling Registry, a source of information about a child's half-siblings for increasing numbers of people who aren't able to find it from traditional sources.

The DSR was created in September 2000 by Wendy Kramer and her son Ryan. The pair were curious about other donor offspring, but found there was no public outlet for people born from anonymous sperm donations to mutually agree to contact each other, so they created the site.

Many parents, Kramer said, are shocked to learn just how many half-siblings a child has. Kramer also said some U.S. sperm banks have treated donor families unethically and that it is time to consider new legislation.

"They think their daughter may have a few siblings, but then they go on our site and find out their daughter actually has 18 brothers and sisters. They're freaked out," said Kramer. "I'm amazed that these groups keep growing and growing."

Follow Us

Mobiledia.com on Facebook

Like 7,840

mobiledia · 2,250 followers



116

Mobiledia News In Your Inbox

Your Email Address Sign Up

Most Popular

- Apple to Release IOS 5 on October 12**
21 people recommend this.
- Steve Jobs Dies at 56**
15 people recommend this.
- Sprint Bets Big on iPhone 4S to Stay Competitive**
18 people recommend this.
- Indestructible Phone Never Needs Fixing**
16 people recommend this.
- Federal Reserve Wants to Monitor Facebook, Twitter**
52 people recommend this.
- One-Man Show Criticizes Apple's Manufacturing Practices**
11 people recommend this.
- Apple Uses Voice to Edge Out Rivals**
10 people recommend this.
- Cell Phone Usage Continues to Rise in North Korea**
10 people recommend this.
- Wall Street Protesters Organize Using Social Media**
31 people recommend this.
- Taliban Shuts Down Cell Service in Afghanistan**
5 people recommend this.
- LTE Chips Still Too Big For iPhone 5**
5 people recommend this.

Facebook social plugin

For example, Cynthia Daily, the mother of a child conceived from a sperm donor, found several siblings on the DSR and then created a separate online group, using the donor's unique identifying number to gather together to track her son's half-siblings -- children who were created using the same donor.

Amazingly, Daily pinpointed 150 children, all conceived with sperm from that same donor. Daily organizes get-togethers so the half-siblings can meet each other.

In Daily's case, the connections are positive, but the often staggering numbers that these Internet searches reveal also raises concerns about the potential negative consequences of having many children fathered by the same donor, which include wider and easier spreading of rare diseases and fear of accidental incest.

In fact, the concern over accidental incest is strong enough that many parents go to great lengths to inform their children of their donor status and don't allow dating other donor-conceived children, just to be safe.

Groups are campaigning to limit the number of children to be produced from one sperm donor, as is the case in European countries where the law restricts offspring from one donor.

In addition to parents and children, sperm donors are also becoming concerned. Many middle-aged men, who were young adults when they donated, are now reporting they were told that probably a maximum of five children may be produced from the donated sperm, and it would be very rare for a donor to have more than 10 children.

These donors are now taking a look at the number of siblings reported under their donor numbers on the DSR and other sites, and the results are shocking to them as well.

DSR founder Kramer said that one sperm donor on her site learned that he had 70 children. He now keeps track of them all on an Excel spreadsheet. "Every once in a while he gets a new kid or twins," she said. "It's overwhelming, and not what he signed up for. He was promised low numbers of children."

The phenomenon is growing to the point that the Style Network created a reality show that aired last month, featuring a meeting between two donor children and their biological father.

Now a Boston lawyer, Ben Seisler was a struggling student at George Mason University Law School in Virginia when he used sperm donation as a way to make some money, about \$150 a donation. He was tracked down by the Seattle mother of the two children through the DSR.

"It was kind of wild," Seisler said of the meeting that was captured for the Style Network's show. "On the one hand, these kids are biologically my kids. On the other hand, they are not my kids. I didn't raise them. I have no control over how they are raised."

Seisler recently married and now lives in upstate New York with his wife, who is reportedly not too happy about the group she calls his "offspring."

Because there is often so much secrecy surrounding sperm and egg donations, according to Kramer, it has been difficult for families of children born via sperm donation to step forward with their concerns. Some heterosexual couples also never tell a child that he or she is the product of a sperm donation.

"There are no rules or regulations about donor identification, testing donors, monitoring numbers of children or medical records," Kramer said. "No one is watching. There are no laws. They don't keep track."

While the industry, regulators and possibly lawmakers establish stricter guidelines and maybe even transparency laws, families with donor-conceived offspring have some online options to use to generate information, and help advocate for changes they believe are much-needed.

Like  2

3

0

Posted In: Editorials & Opinion (83) | Is This Thing On? (24)

Companies News

- ▶ Apple News
- ▶ AT&T News
- ▶ Facebook News
- ▶ Google News
- ▶ HP News
- ▶ HTC News
- ▶ LG News
- ▶ Microsoft News
- ▶ Motorola News
- ▶ Nokia News
- ▶ RIM News
- ▶ Samsung News
- ▶ Sony Ericsson News
- ▶ Sprint News
- ▶ T-Mobile News
- ▶ Twitter News
- ▶ Verizon News

Editorials & Opinion

- ▶ Is This Thing On?
- ▶ News Under the Sun
- ▶ The Score

Business News

- ▶ Finance News
- ▶ Mergers & Acquisitions News
- ▶ Politics News
- ▶ Strategies & Solutions News

Gadgets & Gear News

- ▶ Innovations & Inventions News
- ▶ Luxury News
- ▶ New Releases

Legal News

- ▶ Patents News
- ▶ Policy News
- ▶ Regulation News

Lifestyle News

- ▶ Arts & Entertainment News
- ▶ Health & Safety News
- ▶ Off-Beat News

Mobile News

- ▶ Apps & Games News
- ▶ Mobile Payments News

Problems & Issues News

- ▶ Crime & Punishment News
- ▶ Hacking News
- ▶ Viruses & Malware News

Social Media News

 Add a comment...

Post to Facebook Posting as Wendy Kramer (Change) **Comment**

Facebook social plugin

News by Date

2011	▶ Jan	▶ Jul	2010	▶ Jan	▶ Jul
	▶ Feb	▶ Aug		▶ Feb	▶ Aug
	▶ Mar	▶ Sep		▶ Mar	▶ Sep
	▶ Apr			▶ Apr	▶ Oct
	▶ May			▶ May	▶ Nov
	▶ Jun			▶ Jun	▶ Dec
2009	▶ Jan	▶ Jul	2008	▶ Jan	▶ Jul
	▶ Feb	▶ Aug		▶ Feb	▶ Aug
	▶ Mar	▶ Sep		▶ Mar	▶ Sep
	▶ Apr	▶ Oct		▶ Apr	▶ Oct
	▶ May	▶ Nov		▶ May	▶ Nov
	▶ Jun	▶ Dec		▶ Jun	▶ Dec
2007	▶ Jan	▶ Jul	2006	▶ Jan	▶ Jul
	▶ Feb	▶ Aug		▶ Feb	▶ Aug
	▶ Mar	▶ Sep		▶ Mar	▶ Sep
	▶ Apr	▶ Oct		▶ Apr	▶ Oct
	▶ May	▶ Nov		▶ May	▶ Nov
	▶ Jun	▶ Dec		▶ Jun	▶ Dec

Latest News



Steve Jobs Dies at 56

THU OCT 06, 2011 12:00 AM | BY

Steve Jobs, the Apple co-founder who pioneered the PC industry and transformed the way people consume music, movies and mobile media, died Wednesday at the age of 56.

Like **29** **10** **0**

ADVERTISEMENT



Google Holds Start-Up Contest in Egypt

WED OCT 05, 2011 4:30 PM | BY

Google is supporting start-ups in Egypt to lay the groundwork for a tech revolution that may usher in the next stage of the country's democracy.

Like **3** **6** **0**



Apple Cuts Price of iPhones to Boost Market Share

WED OCT 05, 2011 4:05 PM | BY

Apple slashed the price of the iPhone 4 and 3GS, a move that may be just as important as the iPhone 4S for future sales.

Like **2** **3** **1**



Amazon, Apple Accused of Price-Fixing E-Books

WED OCT 05, 2011 3:50 PM | BY

Digital booksellers and publishers have been accused of fixing prices on e-books part of an expanding, legal backlash from customers seeking lower-priced digital downloads.

Like **2** **17** **0**



Taliban Shuts Down Cell Service in Afghanistan

WED OCT 05, 2011 3:24 PM | BY

The Taliban is taking control of cell towers in Afghanistan, manipulating the technology it once eschewed to promote its views and assert control over the local population.

Like 9

8

0

Newest Phones



Apple iPhone 4S

AT&T / Sprint / Verizon



HTC Amaze 4G

T-Mobile



LG Marquee

Sprint



Sony Ericsson
Xperia Play 4G

AT&T



RIM BlackBerry
Torch (9850)

Verizon

More Phones: [New Phones](#)

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Specs](#) | [Forums](#) | [Glossary](#) | [Shop](#)

[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Feeds](#) | [Site Index](#)

Mobiledia Network: [Mobiledia.com](#) | [CellReception.com](#) | [CellRisk.com](#) | [Appedia.com](#) | [Tabletedia.com](#) | [iTVedia.com](#)

©2002-2011 Mobiledia Corp. All Rights Reserved. [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)