

wyndeham pre-press



Wendy turned her own search into a campaign to help others

# This woman found my son's secret family

With the help of Wendy Kramer, Luna Jaffe's son Hunter is getting to meet siblings he never knew he had – all sharing the same sperm donor father



REAL LIFE

Hunter (centre) with Annie, Tanner, Derrick and Cassidy in LA



A PRECIOUS GIFT  
Hunter with mother Luna and her partner Toni

Can you imagine knowing you have a father, but having no idea who – or where – he is? Or passing people in the street and knowing any one of them could be your own brother or sister?

Sperm donation has made thousands of delighted people all over the world parents – like Luna Jaffe, who gave birth to her son Hunter, now 10, two years after divorcing her husband.

But the reality is that countless children will grow up knowing nothing about their genetic brothers and sisters. 'I never crossed my mind Hunter might have siblings,' Luna tells *Woman's Own*.

Now, one modern day fairy godmother has stepped in. Wendy Kramer has made it

her mission to unite siblings born by sperm donation. She'd used the same method to conceive her son, but when he started asking questions about where he'd come from, she realised she could give him something better than answers – she could find his brothers and sisters.

The search led to Wendy setting up a website called The Donor Sibling Registry – DSR for short – with the sole aim of connecting mums who had donor children. 'When my son Ryan was two, he asked the question I had

been dreading, "Is my dad dead?" Wendy tells us. 'I'd expected him to be curious, but I didn't know how to help him find out more because of the laws protecting the anonymity of sperm donors. But, looking into Ryan's eyes, something occurred to me. I knew that if other women had used the same donor as me, it meant Ryan had half-siblings out there. As well as trying to trace his father, I wanted to help him find them, and to help other families do the same.'

**'Ryan asked, "Is my dad dead?"'**

In the past 20 years it's

estimated that around 36,000 children have been born following sperm donation in the UK alone. A typical donor could father up to 10 children, so as well as potential siblings there are health implications. 'What if the donor hadn't mentioned a hereditary disease on his application form?' says Wendy. 'And, as donors might father a number of children, there was a chance that, when Ryan was older, he could unknowingly start a relationship with a sibling. We needed to find them.'

Other parents clearly shared Wendy's concerns because the DSR took off, with this unusual coffee club connecting people

who had the same donor reference number – meaning they'd used sperm from the same man.

So when Luna, from Portland, Oregon, who lives with her partner Toni, heard about Wendy's work on TV, she went online to see if Hunter had any siblings.

'I assumed any information about donor siblings would be kept private by the clinic,' says Luna. 'But after hearing about Wendy I was amazed to find that

Hunter had eight brothers and sisters.' Luna was still digesting

this when she received an email from a woman called Carla Lundblade, who lived three hours away in Medford, Oregon. She and her husband Rick had used a donor to have their son, Derrick, eight. He was the same genetic father Luna had used, making Derrick Hunter's half-brother.

'I asked Hunter, who was then nine, if he wanted to meet Derrick and he said yes,' says Luna. 'We got together for the first time last August and it was amazing how similar they were. They had the same relaxed temperaments, and they have the same stocky build – even down to their big flat feet!'

Luna had worried that the boys might not get along, but both families quickly grew close.

In January this year, they travelled to LA to meet the boys' half-sister Annie, 14, who lives there with her mum, Karla Ross.

During the trip, the boys also met their brother Tanner, 12, who lives with his mum Dana Gavin and his adopted sister Cassidy, eight, in Mesa, Arizona.

'It was amazing how well the children got on,' smiles Luna. 'There was no awkwardness and they joked around as though they had always known each other. I'm constantly amazed at the similarities. They're all very sporty, and Annie and Hunter are both very musical.'

The children meeting each other hasn't just benefited them

– it's provided much-needed support for the mums, too.

'We chat all the time on the phone, and on Facebook,' smiles Luna.

Last month, she took Hunter to San Francisco to meet his siblings Jack\*, nine, and Emily\*, six, who live with their mum Jane\*.

Luna also knows of a twin brother and sister in Texas born to the same donor. But there's one person left to find – the children's dad.

'He's the one piece of their lives that is unexplained,' admits Luna. 'We have a childhood photo of him, which the donor service gave us, and we know certain things, such as he was very tall and an athlete. Carla knows his birthday is 1 April, so on that date she

posted his picture on Facebook with a caption saying, "Thank you for our beautiful babies!" Luna knows the donor opted out of being contacted by the children he's fathered, but the kids and their mums are just ecstatic to have found each other.

'We will always be in each other's lives,' says Luna. She says she's so grateful to DSR founder Wendy, whose own son Ryan, now 19, has found six half-sisters through the site. And in the

10 years that the Registry has been running, more than 7,000 people have been connected with siblings. Some have even met their biological fathers.

'I feel privileged to be able to help people,' says Wendy. 'Ryan used to look in the mirror and part of him remained invisible. But since connecting with his biological family – and his dad – he's filled in the gaps. That is amazing to me.'



Wendy with her son Ryan

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## THE NEW CLAN

Luna Jaffe, Karla Ross, Carla Lundblade and Dana Gavin, who all had children by the same sperm donor

## 6 facts about sperm donation

- 1 Over 500 sperm donors are needed annually in the UK. Last year there were only 184.
- 2 Those born from donations after 2005 can ask for the donor's identity when they reach 18.
- 3 Donors can say who they want to receive their sperm, and

how many families they would like to help, up to a maximum of 10 in the UK. But they have no legal, financial or social obligations to any child created.

- 4 Rigorous medical tests are carried out before a man can donate.
- 5 Donors in the UK are unpaid, but can claim for expenses and loss of earnings up to an overall maximum of £250 per course of sperm donation.
- 6 Donors in the US are paid £22-£65 per specimen, with bonuses of up to £650.

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