

CNN INTERVIEW

NGUYEN: Well good morning and welcome back. Children conceived by sperm donations track down their biological siblings. Sounds strange or maybe not. It's happening. CNN's Deborah Feyerick introduces us to such a group.

DEBORAH FEYERICK, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): They laugh and joke as if they've known each other forever. Five brothers and sisters, half siblings who share a father they have never met. In fact, they only met within the last year.

You guys are really the first generation on some levels to be searching for one another. Why?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's like finding long, lost siblings you never had. How many chances is that? What are the odds that that's going to happen?

FEYERICK: More surprising for 15-year-old Justin, an only child. Unlike the others here, he only found out this summer he was conceived using donor sperm. Immediately curious, he went online and that's where he found twins Erin and Rebecca and siblings Tyler and Mackenzie, all from the same donor, donor 66. All live in the Denver area within an hour's drive from each other.

ERIN BALDWIN, CHILD OF SPERM DONOR: It's always that connection that you feel like you have gone way back, but you really haven't. You've just met.

FEYERICK: The one they haven't met is their genetic father. From his written profile which most potential mothers get, they know donor 66 was a surgical assistant. His sperm went to three mothers treated by the same doctor in the Denver area. Wendy Kramer brought the teens together through her website, donorsiblingregistry.com. She created it with her son, Ryan, to help him find his own donor dad. So far the site has made 1,000 matches between donor siblings or between donors and their children.

WENDY KRAMER, FOUNDER, DONOR SIBLING REGISTRY: So there's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11 families with 15 children all born from the same donor.

FEYERICK: And you think that this is almost an underreporting of the number. KRAMER: Oh, absolutely. Forty percent of women report their live births, so we're seeing a fraction here.

FEYERICK: Sperm banks are not required to track the number of children born from any one donor. There may be two or 200. Since a donor may donate multiple times, there's just no way to know for sure. How many brothers and sisters do you think you have out there?

RYAN KRAMER, CHILD OF SPERM DONOR: I would say probably between 15 and 20 or so.

FEYERICK: Wendy's son Ryan has never met any of them. He is 15, and by all accounts a genius. We met him at the University of Colorado where he will soon be a sophomore majoring in aerospace engineering. He easily answers calculus and physics questions. The questions about his own biological dad are much, much tougher.

RYAN KRAMER: Parts about my face, my brow or teeth or my nose or certain things just, you know, clearly don't come from my mother and to see those in somebody else would just answer a world of questions for me.

FEYERICK: Ryan's donor dad likely wasn't much older than Ryan is now. In fact, the majority of donors accepted by sperm banks are college students. They must be handsome, smart, outgoing, the kind of guy a girl would like to date. It's no coincidence many sperm banks have clinics within walking distance of major campuses. The work is easy. The pay is good.

DR. CAPPY ROTHMAN, CALIFORNIA CRYOBANK: They can make between \$600 and \$900 a month just coming to visit us a couple of times.

FEYERICK: Dr. Cappy Rothman is a pioneer in the field of donor sperm. What are we looking at here?

ROTHMAN: The next generation.

FEYERICK: He founded California Cryobank in the mid 1970s and estimates as many as 3/4 of a million babies have been born from his sperm bank alone, a daunting number considering there are now 150 sperm banks across the country. When Rothman began, the controversy was using a stranger's sperm to have a baby. The controversy now, Rothman says, children trying to track down their genetic donors, men who never intended to be found. Do you guarantee the anonymity of the donors?

ROTHMAN: We try to. We thought we did. We hoped we could, but after what's been taking place with the misuse of some of the technology out there, I don't think we can absolutely guarantee.

FEYERICK: Most potential mothers sign contracts agreeing to respect the donor's privacy. Wendy says she never did. It may not matter. Testing DNA is as easy as swabbing your cheek and the growth of genetic databases could make it all but impossible for donors to remain anonymous. One teenager recently used a saliva sample, had his DNA analyzed and found his genetic father through a DNA database. KRAMER: I see them all on my web site, and over the next 10 years this wave of kids is about to hit this sperm bank industry and want answers to their questions.

FEYERICK: Donor dads have absolutely no legal or financial responsibility to their genetic offspring, so then what is it children like Ryan really want?

RYAN KRAMER: Really all I'm looking for from the donor is just to answer a few of those questions I have. You know, I'm not looking for a relationship or money or anything that, you know, a lot of people assume that donor kids want to know about them. Really it's just a curiosity about who he is and, you know, where I came from.

FEYERICK: The five Denver-born kids from donor 66 are now debating how far they want to go to find their genetic dad. So show of hands, who wants to find the donor?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I would love to, but --

FEYERICK: You're not so sure. Why not?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: (INAUDIBLE) I have two brothers, two sisters.

FEYERICK: Sisters and brothers, once strangers, now family.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You know, your friends you may never see them again after college or after high school, but I'm going to know all of them for the rest of my life.

FEYERICK: And who is to say how many more children from donor 66 they will meet down the road. Deborah Feyerick, CNN, Boulder, Colorado.

NGUYEN: Such an interesting topic and a raging debate. Coming up in the 9:00 Eastern hour making that sibling connection. We're going to talk with Wendy Kramer and her son Ryan there you just saw in Deborah's piece. They're the founders and administrators of the donor sibling registry.