

# Ryan And Anna, Two Half Siblings Meet

By Wendy Kramer

I was sitting at my desk one day this past February when I saw the posting for donor #1058 come through the Donor Sibling Registry's website. My heart skipped a beat. Immediately I called Ryan into the room. He recognized the tone in my voice right away. The posting was written by a 13-year-old girl. Uh oh.

We had been through two half-sibling near-misses already. Both times, the parents refused to let the meeting happen.

Both times, Ryan was devastated. The whole reason we had established the Donor Sibling Registry was so that Ryan could hopefully find and meet a half sibling. After years of waiting and watching so many others connect on the site it actually looked like he might be the 2,910th person on the DSR to match. Would the third time be the charm for Ryan? Could this 13-year-old posting on the DSR under #1058 be the one?

As DSR director, I first had to check, as I would with any posting of someone under 18, that she had her parent's permission to do this. As I was typing my message, I received this from Anna's mother:

"Dear Wendy,

My daughter, Anna, just responded to a posting by you regarding donor number 1058. This is the first time we have explored the registry and are very anxious to find out if your son is indeed a match.

My husband and I allowed Anna to register herself last night, with our supervision. She is 13-years-old, and was born on May 22nd, 1993. Our donor was a Mechanical Engineering student. He was born in 1967. He has one brother who is a pilot. Does any of this sound familiar to you?

As you can imagine, we are looking forward to a response and hope to hear from you soon.

Regards,

Ann Marie (Anna's Mom)

Robert ( Anna's Dad)"

Another message from Anna herself arrived simultaneously:

" On the posting page you and I are in a pale yellow box, both with donor number 1058. Does this mean that there is a match?"

Oh, the surge of relief that washed over Ryan and me. This young girl not only had her parents' permission, they seemed as excited as we were to have found the match.

Call it destiny, but Anna shares the same birthday with Ryan. As I was serving a three-year-old Ryan his Superman birthday cake, Anna was being born 2000 miles away.

Within seconds, I emailed Ann Marie and gave her my work number. Within 30 minutes -- she waited for Bob to come home from work -- she called. Ryan had already gone back to school so he missed this first phone contact.

We were giddy. And in shock. I told her that even though we were essentially strangers, we shared something so precious. We quickly traded a few bits about each of our kids, Anna asked to speak with me so that she could ask questions about the other half siblings that we knew about.

Later that evening Ryan and Anna linked up on My Space. They IM-ed. Over the next few weeks Ann Marie and I had several phone calls and eventually we got everyone for a telephonic pow-wow. We talked about the possibility of meeting. We all wanted that to happen ASAP.

Talk about synchronicity. ABC Television's "Primetime" wanted to update a story that they had done more than four years ago about Ryan and the beginnings of the DSR. This was a golden opportunity. Six weeks after Anna found Ryan, we were making plans to fly to NY to meet in Central Park and spend two days getting to know each other in New York City.

Excitement was running high. Ryan bought Anna a University of Colorado sweatshirt. The morning of the meeting each family had a camera crew to walk with towards Central Park. The show staff had set a meeting place but our two families bumped into each other walking along the park road.

It was tremendous. We all hugged. The smiles on Anna's and Ryan's faces were beatific. It was like they sensed "home" in each other. There was an undeniable bond and recognition of the familiar. We parents scoured the faces of the kids, looking for resemblances. It was very emotional, to say the least. I was overwhelmed with gratitude for Anna's parents' honesty with their daughter and how they honored her curiosity and need to search and connect with Ryan. While Ann Marie and I had a more obvious bond, I was deeply moved by Bob's willingness to put aside any possible fears or concerns about Anna finding her biological family. In this matter, he

made his daughter more important than anything else. That is the best dad anyone could want.

We spent the first hour or so asking each other questions, taking pictures and comparing notes. We spend the next 48 hours getting to know each other and marveling at the similarities (and differences) in Ryan and Anna. It was clear to us, that even though we had just met, that we were connecting as family. Strange to be getting to know family for the first time.

We were laying the groundwork for a lifelong relationship. We made it clear that Ryan and Anna would be defining the terms and that there was no pressure for it to look a certain way. We told them that as they matured, that relationship would certainly evolve. We parents would execute the logistical plans, but based only on the desires of both Anna and Ryan.

Anna wore her CU sweatshirt with pride, despite the 75 degree weather.

It was interesting that both she and Ryan referred to each other as "brother" and "sister". We parents had been using "half brother" and "half sister". When we were talking about what their kids would be to each other, I suggested "half cousins". Anna just looked at me and said, "No. Just cousins".