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Competitive | The process to donate sperm to the California Cryobank is exhaustive and arduous; only nine out of every 1,000 sperm donor applicants are actually accepted.

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## Giving sperm is about more than money

**The process of donating sperm is more extensive than some people realize.**

**By: Michelle Ragsdale**

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We've all been privy to the classic scene in movies and sitcoms: Desperate male protagonist, in a last plea to retain some sense of self-worth and earn a quick buck, struts into a sperm bank, makes a quick deposit and walks out chipper, the audience cackling at the wild antics of the little rascal.

If only life imitated art.

In reality, sperm banks couldn't be farther from Hollywood's wacky portrayal. With new developments in medicine every day, it is becoming easier to conceive - and with easier conceptions, the importance of quality sperm is on the rise, as are quality sperm banks.

California Cryobank, one of the leading sperm banks and largest laboratories, is pioneering the art of helping those with reproductive issues, same sex couples and single women hoping to conceive.

Established in 1977, California Cryobank has four locations in Westwood, West Hollywood, Palo Alto and Boston.

Uniquely, California Cryobank's donors are often male college students.

The Cryobank today, however, embodies more than just a college student's quick option to make a buck; it stresses the ability to help people of all backgrounds realize their dream of becoming parents.

"I love it. It's the most satisfying thing I've been a part of," said Scott Brown, California Cryobank's communications executive.

Modern-day sperm banks have evolved into a serious commitment on the donor's part, evident in the long process to becoming a donor.

With only nine out of every 1,000 applicants accepted to donate at California Cryobank, the process is long and tedious. Each applicant first completes an online application, and must meet requirements such as weight, height (at least 5-foot-10) and having completed or being in the process of completing a four-year university education.

If the application is accepted, the possible donor is then put through exhaustive tests that include analysis of sperm count and potency, as well as a complete genetic and family study. Eventually, if everything clears and the donor agrees to donate several times a week for a minimum of one year, the donor is accepted into the Cryobank.

The donor qualification process was longer than one anonymous college student donor had previously assumed, the donor said.

He passed through the lengthy process and has been donating for almost a year.

"You learn a lot about yourself going through your family history and genetic screening," said the donor, who learned about California Cryobank through advertisements.

Because of marketing strategies that often target young males, many of California Cryobank's donors are men who are financing their own college educations, using the compensation from donating sperm to pay for books, tuition or housing.

"At first I thought of the monetary compensation, you know, but then I thought it was helpful," the donor said.

Many men view sperm banks as a quick deposit in return for cash, but most cryobanks are looking for more than men who are short on money.

"This is to help people," Brown said.

California Cryobank's focus is the clientele, and with its slogan, "When you succeed, we succeed," it couldn't be more evident that the company prides itself in the joy it brings to couple's lives.

Although the bank only has four offices, it ships sperm all over the world. To date, California Cryobank has clientele in 25 countries with both heterosexual and homosexual couples, as well as single mothers buying sperm.

A global influence such as this is sometimes overwhelming for potential male donors.

"This may not be for everybody. You are affecting the lives of total strangers," Brown said.

To protect their donors, California Cryobank offers men the option of being open or anonymous donors. Open donors allow potential children to contact them once the children are adults, should they wish to know their biological father.

Anonymous donors, however, are not required to meet or talk with any of their biological children once the children reach legal adulthood.

Most men are anonymous donors because they do not want to know where their own lives will be 20 years after sperm is donated.

In the meantime, California Cryobank makes it easy for busy students to donate.

"It's really convenient. The facility for me is within walking distance. There's no appointment needed; I can drop in before or between classes," the donor said.

California Cryobank isn't quite the sperm bank one would find in a sitcom, but is uniquely interested in helping couples conceive.

Even if it's not as easy to make a quick buck as sitcom's portray, making a couple's lifelong dream of conception come to life seems even more worthwhile.

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