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## **Reuniting families through DNA technology**

By Angeline Taylor

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A local woman has started a database that will allow adoptees and their birth families to track each other down across the world.

Adopted children looking for their birth parents have encountered two obstacles: wondering where to start, then getting past a birth certificate that read "bastard" or "illegitimate."

As *The Seeker*, talk show host and columnist Linda Hammer has been helping people find loved ones, military buddies, college roommates and others they have lost touch with. Her motto is: If you can't find your missing friends and relatives through *The Seeker*, they have left the planet.

Now she has taken on a bigger project.

Her new Touched By Adoption Web site will use DNA banking to unite families separated because of adoption. Hammer thought of the idea three years ago after hearing about Dr. Scott Woodward's genealogy research. Woodward was gathering DNA from four generations of a family.

"If he can bank DNA," she thought, "why can't I? So many adoptees keep coming to me."

### **The way it works**

Once an individual is signed up online, TBA Inc. sends out a DNA kit. The kit contains four cotton swabs and instructions.

Individuals rub the swab on their cheek along the inside of their mouth, then place them in an accompanying envelope and mail them back. The DNA is registered and recorded online, where it will remain anonymous until a match is made. The service is free.

TBA will be working with DNA Diagnostics Center Inc., which claims to be one of the world's largest DNA paternity labs. Much of the delay in getting the Web site up, Hammer said, was in finding a top-notch DNA company to assist.

"It took a long time to find a good company," Hammer said. "Then 200 people signed up within 24 hours."

**Lost and found**

The beauty of the program is that those in the system want to be found, she said.

"If you give up your kid for adoption," Hammer said, "it doesn't mean you've given up."

Hammer said the site is not paternity-based. She is interested in adoption-related searches only.

"We really don't want to abuse that," she said. "The majority of the Venice searches are adoption related."

**For more information**

To access the Touched By Adoption Web site, go to:  
[www.touchedbyadoption.org](http://www.touchedbyadoption.org).

*Article available at:*

<http://www.sun-herald.com/searches/search.cfm?mode=dspArticle&articleID=241585>