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Matchmaker sets stage for romance to spark

Woman plans dating events

By Sarah Bradshaw
Poughkeepsie Journal

Vicki Weed is in love with love.

"I'm a hopeless romantic," Weed said. "To see sparks fly when people fall in love is just amazing. I get a natural energy from it."

Weed, 34, runs Deja Vu Event Creation out of her home in Montgomery, Orange County. Besides 12 years of wedding planning experience, she recently added "matchmaker" to her resume. A month ago, Weed was hired by Cupid.com as a pre-dating event coordinator, aka Cupid.com's Hudson Valley matchmaker. It's a part-time position that helps her slow season as a wedding planner.

Cupid.com, headquartered in Poughkeepsie, is an online dating service for singles. In 2003, Cupid merged with PreDating.com, one of the largest speed-dating companies in the nation. Today, events are held in more than 100 cities. Weed holds events in Dutchess, Orange and Putnam counties.

Pre-dating, also known as "speed dating," is a formalized matchmaking process in which singles are paired for a few minutes in order to see if there is a connection. The pairs are rotated until everyone has had a chance to mingle.

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Vicki Weed, 34, browses Cupid.com's pre-dating Web site at home in Montgomery, Orange County, last week, with her cat, Daisy, on her lap. Weed is a pre-dating event coordinator for the Hudson Valley.

Events scheduled

The matchmaker's job is to set up venues in which events are held. In Wappinger, The Inn at Osborne Hill is a popular site.

The coordinator keeps track of who registers, creates Cupid.com profiles and makes sure the events run smoothly. Therefore, he or she must be detail-oriented. Weed sets up the tables where the singles mingle, keeps track of the six minutes allowed per couple to chat during each round and keeps the atmosphere fun, friendly and comfortable.

"I know how to help people relax. I tell them they are there to have fun. If they meet someone great. If they don't, it's OK," she said.

According to Eric Straus, president of Cupid.com, the most important characteristics of a pre-dating matchmaker are a love for matching couples and a bubbly personality.

Weed has been setting up friends, family and co-workers for years.

It's in her blood. Before she was born, her parents set up her grandparents. Weed's maternal grandmother and her paternal grandfather married after being set up on a date by her parents.

"My parents wanted to spend more time together, so they set up their single parents," she said. "It's a love story that has inspired me."

She believes matchmaking is her fate. Weed met her husband on a blind date arranged by a co-worker. She fell in love with him instantly after a date at a comedy club.

"I've been told I have an obnoxious laugh. The comedian even stopped in the middle of his routine and asked, 'Where is that loud laughing coming from?' " she said. Riding home, her future husband, Harvey, told her, "I love your laugh. I could listen to you laugh the rest of our lives."

"He had me from then on," she said. Today, they have two young sons, Jake and Mason, and two pets, a chocolate Labrador retriever named Parker and a deaf cat named Daisy.

Weed's job at Cupid.com is part-time and she doesn't do it for the money. Straus said 85 percent of its coordinators are part-time. They are not paid hourly, but are given a percentage based on the number of people registered for the events.

There are professional matchmakers who are hired by clients to help them find true love. In addition, there are hundreds of online dating services and speeding services, especially in major cities.

Straus projected his company will double in 2006 by expanding in existing markets and by

Profile

Vicki Weed

Age: 34.

Position: Match-maker/pre-dating event coordinator with Cupid.com. She also owns Deja Vu Event Creation, a wedding planning business based in her Montgomery home.

Years experience: 12 as an event planner.

Education/training: Graduated from Fort Pierce Central High School in Florida.

Family: Husband, Harvey; sons Jake, 8, and Mason, 5.

On the Web

- On the Job stories are on the Journal's Web site at www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/projects/on_the_job

Job facts

Matchmaker/ Pre-dating Coordinator

Education/training: Experience in the field of event planning is helpful. Cupid.com provides some on-the-job training.

Essential skills: Enjoying matching people. Also, the person must be able to speak in public, be very outgoing and organized.

Job outlook: The president of Cupid.com projects the company will have 50 percent growth in 2006, partly from new markets and partly from growth in established markets. The company has 100 speed-dating coordinators. More coordinators will be needed.

Wages: The majority of Cupid matchmakers are part-time (85 percent). Pay varies depending on the number of speed-dating events held and the number of people registered.

creating new markets. As the company grows, the demand for matchmakers will increase.

Sarah Bradshaw can be reached at sbradshaw@poughkeepsiejournal.com

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Source: Journal research

Pre-dating events

- Pre-dating for singles ages 26-39 will take place at 7 p.m. Jan. 9 at Lexington Square Cafe, 510 Lexington Ave., Mount Kisco. The cost is \$35 if registered before Saturday.
- Pre-dating for ages 32-44 will be at 6:20 p.m. Feb. 8 at C.B. Driscoll's, 1100 Union Ave., Newburgh. Cost is \$34 if registered before Feb. 6.
- Pre-dating ages 26 to 39 will be at 9:20 p.m. Feb. 8 at C.B. Driscoll's. Cost is \$34 if registered before Feb. 6. Visit <http://www.cupid.com/> to register.

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