



Recently divorced woman plays cupid for middle aged

By Jennifer Best

For young adults, college life offers not only education but also a place to mix and mingle among peers. Some meet their lifelong loves there.

Once in the workforce, the dating scene gets a bit sketchier. The schedule's tighter; the pool of eligibles dwindles.

Imagine the difficulty in later years.

Marianne Buckmeyer doesn't have to imagine. Newly single, she faces head-on the challenge of meeting new and interesting singles.

Meeting people generally isn't a problem for the energetic woman with the hearty laugh. Buckmeyer has been very active in Nipomo. She's served as president of Save the Mesa and chair of the Nipomo Community Advisory Council and its related Nipomo Traffic Committee.

"If anyone's going to meet anyone, it's going to be me," she said. "I'm out there shaking hands, doing research, talking to a lot of people."

It's finding singles in her own life stage and interest group, however, that remains a challenge.

"Everyone I know is a pair," she said.

When she was in her 20s, Buckmeyer said, she found it easy to go to a bar and meet other people her age.

"I'm not sure there's a bar for 50-year-olds," she said. "And I'm not sure I want to hang out in a bar with a bunch of married guys. Whatever way you can think of (for) meeting someone in a rural retirement area like this, I've already done them."

"I just can't hang out in the parking lot at Jocko's. I really am beyond going out to a bar. Because of my age, most of the people I know are middle aged, retired, married or involved in local politics of some sort."

She remembered seeing friends of her mother sitting home alone after becoming single, either through widowhood or divorce.


"At this stage in my life, I'm not interested in sitting in my house dusting and gardening," Buckmeyer noted. "I'm not interested in finding my perfect match, either. I'm interested in being out and about with people and socializing and having fun, enjoying life."

While bemoaning the difficulties with her sister, the topic of "speed dating" came up.

"Of course, I laughed," Buckmeyer said. "Everyone laughs."

Now Buckmeyer is the event coordinator for Cupid.com's PreDating, an Internet-linked service that offers mingling opportunities throughout the United States. Buckmeyer's new post spans San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

"It's sweeping the nation," Buckmeyer said. "People sit around and they don't know how to meet anyone. They don't want to walk into a bar by themselves, but they'll go to a bar to attend an event."

 Nipomo resident Marianne Buckmeyer is a new event coordinator for Cupid.com's Internet-linked PreDating service that offers mingling opportunities for singles. By Michael A. Mariant

That's where she and Cupid.com come in.

For \$35, event registrants are included in a round-robin date at a public venue. Participants match up for a six-minute meet-and-greet before moving on to the next date candidate, a process commonly referred to as "speed dating."

When the hour is up, each participant fills out a survey that the event coordinator enters into Cupid.com's system. The system then matches any potentially compatible pairs.

Unlike computer dating, PreDating offers human interaction.

"I need to see people face to face, to laugh, to talk and to get to know even a little bit in person (about) people before I decide whether or not to go on a one-on-one date," Buckmeyer said. "I can't tell if there's chemistry unless I'm in the same room with them."

But first dates can become long, drawn-out and uncomfortable.

"With PreDating, you're not wasting yourself on a bunch of people you don't want to spend time with," she explained. "There's no uncomfortable rejection."

Initially, Buckmeyer looked into simply attending some PreDating sessions. But her research showed the events were generally set up for those in their 20s and early 30s.

"So, what, life ends at 35? Did we become chopped liver at middle age? This is silly," she said.

So she wrote to Cupid.com proposing events for the older crowd. The company responded by offering her a job.

"What better way to meet people than to be running the thing?" she said.

As coordinator, she won't be able to mix and mingle during the session, but it will get her involved, and the company does offer a related service for its employees.

The first local Cupid.com PreDating session will be held April 25 at Santa Maria Inn. The session is for women ages 26 to 36 and men ages 28 to 38.

"Bring a friend," Buckmeyer said.

On May 3, Nipomo's first such event will raise the bar. Women ages 39 to 49 and men ages 42 to 52 are invited to participate at Blacklake Golf Resort.

"I'm not gleefully thrilled to be divorced, but it's an amicable divorce," Buckmeyer noted. "I don't want to bemoan the situation. I want to do something about it, and if I can help others in my situation, even better.

"If you don't put it out there, you're not going to get anything back," she said.

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