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Mon, Feb. 13, 2006

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Frisky otters set pace for speed-dating soiree

Maymont hosts speed dating at annual Valentine event.



By **KATY HERSHBERGER**

Date published: **2/9/2006**

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Maymont's two otters won't be the only couple cuddling at the Richmond estate on Saturday.

Single guests can look for their own valentines during speed dating sessions at Maymont's pre-Valentine's Day soiree, With Love From Your Significant Otter. This is the first time Maymont has included speed dating in the annual affair.

"We're really excited about it because we've had a good response so far," said Carla Murray, assistant director of public relations and marketing for Maymont. "I think it's going to be a successful addition to an already successful event."

Each of the three 30-minute speed dating sessions will involve 10 male and 10 female participants. The singles will spend three minutes in a one-on-one "date" with each member of the opposite sex.

"It's an opportunity for someone to meet a bunch of people in a short amount of time," Murray said.

Speed dating was included because, in the past, many singles have been drawn to this "date night" type of event, said Cindy Gricus, assistant director of development for Maymont. The addition has gained interest, though so far mostly

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Maymont's Valentine program, which centers around a pair of frisky otters, will feature speed-dating sessions for humans.

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females have signed up to participate.

"We just need to beef up our contingent of men," she said.

The flirtatious function will take place in the Maymont nature center exhibit, which houses a nocturnal gallery and otter tank, as well as a 20-foot waterfall that cascades into fish tanks. The event, which is sponsored by the Dooley Noted Society, centers around the otters, a male-female pair that Murray says is very romantic.

Attendees may leave their black ties at home, but should dress to impress. The night will include live jazz music from the Brian Jones Quartet and a silent auction featuring fine art, furniture, jewelry and gift certificates from local Richmond businesses.

Caterers such as A Sharper Palate and Sophisticated Soirees will provide hors d'oeuvres. Beverages will also be available at a cash bar.

Maymont is a 100-acre Victorian estate owned by the city of Richmond. It includes a house museum, children's farm, carriage collection and nature center. The Dooley Noted Society, Maymont's young-professionals group, raises awareness and funds for the estate.

To reach KATY HERSHBERGER: 540/374-5400, ext. 5617

WHAT: With Love From Your Significant Otter

WHERE: Robin's Nature and Visitor Center at Maymont, 2201 Shields Lake Drive, Richmond

WHEN: Saturday, 6:30-9:30 p.m.

COST: Advance tickets (available through today): \$14, \$10 for members. At the door: \$18, \$14 for members.

INFO: For details or to purchase tickets, visit maymont.org or call 804/358-7166, ext. 313.

FYI: Attendees must be 21 or older. To reserve a time for speed dating, contact Tanya Bumstead at tbumstead@bumyskitchen.com.

Date published: 2/9/2006



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