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Published January 28, 2006

Fast-forward to love

Local singles try six-minute 'dates' to make friends and maybe more.

By Joyce Rudolph, News-Press and Leader

Ken Kurisu is an outgoing guy who has never had trouble meeting people, he said. But when the La Crescenta resident heard about a speed-dating event, he thought he'd give it a try.

He made a connection that first night.

No one was more surprised at the match than Dena Gould. She had only gone to the event to provide moral support for a girlfriend, and wasn't even looking for a date, Kurisu said.

But that was October 2004 and they've been a couple for more than a year.

advertisement "That night, I met someone very special," Kurisu said.

He believes in the program so much, he now works for Cupid.com/PreDating, serving as host at speed-dating nights in the area.

"Dena and I have been hosts for these events and it's been a wonderful experience," he said.

"I believe, if we're successful, we should give back to that event, so that it will continue to be successful."

Kurisu led a speed-dating event Wednesday night at Chandra Thai Restaurant in Burbank, where 14 women and 13 men participated. When participants arrived they were given a number.

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The tables were set for two people and those with the same number sat across from each other.

They had six minutes to chat. When a bell rang, the men stood up and moved to the next table.

They had one minute to jot down notes before the next session began.

The day after the event, participants go online and enter the numbers of the people they would like to speak to again, said Julia Rabago, of Montrose, who organizes the speed dating events in Glendale and Burbank.

"If a girl does not want to meet with a guy who is interested in her, her contact information will not be exchanged, so he will never be turned down in person," she said.

Finding that special someone is a matter of meeting as many people as possible, said Eric Straus, Cupid.com's president and chief executive.

"Meeting someone new is a numbers game, he said. "In my view, everything in life is a numbers game. If I want to go on a job interview, I don't go on one job interview. I go on 10 job interviews. I think people forget dating is a numbers game too."

But finding romance was just part of participating in the event, some of the speed daters said.

Many would be happy even if they only came away with friendships.

It was Elaine Carbonell's third speed-dating event.

"One of my New Year's resolutions was to meet more people," she said.

"This is probably the best way because nobody comes up to you in bars. L.A. guys don't do anything, they just stand there."

Carbonell spent a year in New York and found the men were much more at ease approaching women at a bar, she said.

"It doesn't have to be a big romantic connection," she said. "It's so cool to just meet somebody."

Michael Tidrick of Hollywood was also at his first speed-dating night.

He met more people that night than he usually meets in a month, he said.

"The people in Hollywood seem to be more interested in schmoozing, getting to know people who can help them with their career, instead of getting to know more about a person," he said.

Looking over the list of the women he spoke to, he said it would take a lot of thought to decide who he'd place on his match list.

"There's something I like about everyone I met," he said. "I'm not sure how to draw the line between someone I think is nice and someone I'd like to spend a lot of time with."

FYI

WHAT: Cupid.com/PreDating speed dating event

WHEN: 6:20 p.m., ages 36 to 49; 8:30 p.m. Christian singles, ages 27 to 42, Feb. 23

WHERE: Tony Roma, 126 N. Maryland Ave., Glendale

COST: \$35

CONTACT: To register, prospective participants can go to www.cupid.com/PreDating or call (213) 503-DATE (3283) and pay by credit card.