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Six-minute speed dates have locals racing the clock

By BECCA GOLDMANN
Avenue Writer

About 26 single men and women from the Gainesville/Ocala area went on a series of six-minute dates in hopes of meeting "the one" Tuesday night at Rigatelli's Italian Grill as part of the World's Largest Speed Dating Event which took place in other cities on Wednesday.



Kevin Parekh / Alligator Staff
Jaime Allen chats with another participant during the minutes they have together before they move on to the next round at a speed dating event at Rigatelli's Italian Grill in The Oaks Mall.

Cupid.com/PreDating Inc., an online dating service dedicated to bringing locals face-to-face through speed dating, hosted the event. Singles across the United States and Canada speed dated simultaneously in their local areas at 7 p. m. on Wednesday, according to Eric Straus, president of the company.

"Our niche is localism," he said. "We tend to get very strong clusters of people. Dating is a very local thing."

With a series of radio ads, Straus said Cupid reaches all demographics.

Jamie Allen, co-owner of Larry's Giant Subs, speed dated for the first time Tuesday.

"Chemistry is everything," he said. "Rejection is not in my vocabulary. I believe there is the right person for everybody."

Allen, 35, said any of the six-minute dates could turn into something long-term. After meeting his last girlfriend online, he said he was interested in a different way of meeting people.

Michelle Amos, a teacher at Fort Clarke Middle School, said she understands the importance of meeting in person. Amos, 34, has speed dated in the past and

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belongs to several other online dating services.

"I've met interesting people," she said. "And I've met creeps just like at any bar."

Amos said she's made friends through speed dating and had a couple of short-term relationships.

Straus said usually people know within the first 30 seconds if there is an attraction. Life is what he calls a "numbers game." The more people you meet, the better your odds are of finding love.

"People in life make the mistake of believing in fate and waiting for Prince Charming to walk in the door," he said. "That's just not the way the real world works."