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Posted Online: February 23, 2006

You can't hurry love! (but you can have fun seeking it)

Letter From Chicago By Jacquee Thomas

Nowadays many singles try to squeeze finding true love into their busy schedules.

One way they may attempt this is through speed dating, or eight-minute dating, or, in a succinct definition: Interview meets Assembly Line.

Ladies are seated at a lineup of tables. Fellows line up to visit each table for an eight-minute chat -- more blatantly, a mutual interview -- to gauge for compatibilities. Then the fellows are prompted to the next table.

At the activity's end, folks check those on their list with whom they would like to spend more time. The ladies and fellas who match checkpoints are given each other's info. They could end with one, many or no prospects.

Some events feature three-minute dating, or: Lounge Lizards on Speed. Folks must talk fast to complete the interview.

Whatever the speed dating time limit, participants are under such pressure, it's hard for chemistry to gleam through, or for conversation to take a natural flow.

Speed dating is a symptom of modern day singles trying to organize their goal of meeting Miss or Mr. Right, like penciling appointments on their calendar, or trying to prod the meeting by quantifying prospects in a matter of minutes.

However, you can't say "Chop-chop!" to Cupid. You simply must be available whenever Cupid strikes.



Nothing beats eyes first met, smiles first exchanged, suddenly. We all have secret checklists regarding who is right for us, and those lists are secretly flexible.

My advice for finding someone to suit you: slow down, go to places you enjoy. First you'll enjoy your time, and perhaps, only perhaps, you'll find a dear companion who enjoys similar things.

Places in Chicago where folks are friendly to talk include the Drake Hotel's Coq d'Or, the Ambassador East's Pump Room, and "Rockabilly Night" the first Thursday of every month at Martyr's on North Lincoln.

I can recommend more, if you give a holler and tell me the sort of venue you seek.

Meanwhile art lovers, singles and couples, will enjoy these venues.

First Fridays

The Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave., hosts "First Fridays" the first Friday of every month, 6 p.m.-10 p.m.

"First Fridays" includes live music or a deejay, appetizers, and a cash bar. All the galleries are open for viewing.

Singles may partake in "Digital Dating." Here, they view artwork on a computer and select an emotion or opinion for each piece.

Their answers result in a "personality color" sticker that they may wear. This provides an icebreaker, among all other conversation pieces.

For more info, visit mcachicago.org and select "Calendar of Events," or call (312) 397-4010.

Art Escape

The Art Institute, 111 S. Michigan, hosts "Art Escape" every other month. Each time it's held on a Thursday during the museum's late hours, 5 p.m.-8 p.m.

This begins with a reception on the museum's original Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room.

There's a cash bar. Food and piped-in music represent a theme of the month. The evening includes a brief presentation of a featured exhibit.

The Art Institute also organizes monthly events for Evening Associates, Art Institute "associates" who meet for art and entertainment venues.

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For more info, visit artic.edu or call (312) 443-3600.

ArtSmart ArtSmart, a program sponsored by the Loyola University Museum of Art, hosts events every other month. ArtSmart members are fun-loving professionals who encourage connoisseurship.

"The Art of the Aphrodisiac: Champagne, Chocolate and Caviar," Feb. 7, was ArtSmart's inaugural event.

For an updated schedule, visit luc.edu/luma, or call (312) 915-7600.

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