Age-old art becomes business

New date service on campus

By Julie Washington

A recent Ohio State graduate has transformed the age-old art of matchmaking into a modern business.

John Allen is the founder of Campus Dating Service, a non-computerized matchmaking operation he began in September and operates the business from his home.

Since then, professors, staff members, graduate, undergraduate, medical and veterinary students have signed up in hopes of meeting that special person. "We have some quite distinguished clients," Allen said.

Women who register for the service have the choice of either choosing a date from the pool of registered men or placing themselves on general availability. Those who sign up under the second option are paired with a compatible person by the dating service.

Men do not have the option of choosing their dates and are given no guarantees they will be matched, Allen said.

"I tell them (men) we have people who have not been matched. Some people are easier to match than others. But you never know who'll register tomorrow," he said.

The registration fee for men is $5; there is no charge for women. Both women and men pay another $5 when a satisfactory pairing is made, he said, and women can continue to choose dates until they find a satisfactory match. The service is open to OSU students, faculty and staff only.

The service gives women a better deal than men, because when he started he was afraid no women would sign up, Allen said.

Allen, a computer specialist who graduated from OSU in 1980, said he interviews each person when they register so he can give personality assessments to prospective dates.

"Other dating services are like a blind date. Our high priority is to make competent matches," he said.

There is no pattern to what people look for in a perfect date, Allen said. Some people are very picky, but no one has said personal attractiveness was most important, he said, adding, "They want someone they can communicate with."

Photographs are not requested with the registration forms, although some people do choose to submit one, he said. "I don't think looks should be that big of a factor," Allen explained.

About 40 percent of those participating in the service are women. The same ratio applies to undergraduate and graduate students, with graduate students in the majority, he said.

Not many foreign women participate because in other cultures a woman who took part in a dating service would be considered immoral, Allen said.

He added he sometimes has to make sure foreign students understand the American concept of dating. One student thought the dating service would send a woman to his apartment, Allen said.

Some people have trouble thinking of their personal strong points when filling out the registration form and others ask him what they should list as their interests, he said. One man wrote he definitely wanted to meet an intelligent woman, and in the process misspelled intelligent.

Limiting the service to OSU students, faculty and staff helps screen out potential troublemakers, he said, although participants are told they are on their own on dates.

Allen said he is enjoying the matchmaking business. He said, "It's been a complete delight. The money is secondary compared to the experiences I've had and the people I've learned about."
Graduate student offers dating service

By Holly Sauer
Lantern staff writer

Have you given up the search for your match-made-in-heaven? Do you now go to the bars just to watch the wide-screen TVs? And do you find yourself actually studying in the Undergraduate Library?

Intimate, the international match-making service for college students, may be the answer to your problem.

"My objective is to prevent loneliness and despair," said Darrell Riser, founder of Intimate. Riser is an OSU graduate student from Texas majoring in social work.

Dates will be found on an experimental basis for Halloween, he said. If the program is successful, Riser will provide the service, which is available to all OSU students, for Valentine's Day and for spring break.

Intimate is a computer-oriented match-making service, Riser said. The computer program for the service is being written by the founder of Micro J, a computer consulting agency, he said.

"I'M WRITING it from the ground up," said the programmer, who wished to remain anonymous. "It's a two-for-one deal, not only will you get a match, you'll end up on another's list."

The applicants can expect a 60 percent chance that their match will be compatible with them, the programmer said.

The fee, which must be sent with the application form, ranges from $6 to $16 depending on the number of matches desired. If no match is found, the applicant gets a partial refund, Riser said.

"All questions are relevant in having a sound relationship," Riser said. Applicants answer questions about themselves and the person they would like to meet.

Questions range from asking the age and height of the applicant to whether or not sex is important in a relationship.

"IT'S NOT exclusive to dating," Riser said. Students can choose if they would like intimacy, friendship, a study or exercise partner, or to assure the compatibility of an already existing relationship.

"Couples are urged to apply," he said.

Riser said he thought of the idea for the service after reading a newspaper article on college student dating. After surveying 50 students if they would like a match-making service at Ohio State, Riser decided to start Intimate.

"As an undergraduate I had to face being away from home, needing someone to talk to," Riser said. He said he knows other students have gone through a time of loneliness. The service can act as an icebreaker for students, he said.

A similar program was developed by Riser at Texas A&M for a fraternity fundraiser. "Everything worked out fine," he said. "A couple of relationships lasted at least a year."

The cost for printing, advertising, computer software and other items for Intimate came to more than $1000. "It's all out of my own pocket," Riser said. He had originally filed for bank loans, but was turned down, he said.

PROFITS FROM the service will be contributed to a nursing home and other charities, Riser said.

"This is just a trial," Riser said. If Riser receives a large response from students, he said he will offer the service again for Valentine's Day and spring break. He plans to expand Intimate to Cleveland and Cincinnati colleges.

Riser said he has filed Intimate with the Better Business Bureau and has a copyright.

Applications are available on bulletin boards in University Hall, Baker Systems Engineering Building, Larkins Hall, Hagerty Hall, Ohio Union, Stillman Hall and Morrill and Lincoln Towers.

The deadline to enter is Thursday. Matches will be sent to applicants Oct. 27.