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8-minute love

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Need to find a Valentine's Day date fast? Is eight minutes fast enough?

Speed dating is coming to Aspen Highlands on Tuesday night, part of 80 "Cupid Parties" being thrown in cities all over the country by 8minuteDating. Singles from the Roaring Fork Valley and the Vail Valley can register for the party and then get ready to meet new people at lightning pace.

As owner of Skadron Marketing Group, Aspen resident Steve Skadron promotes events at Iguana's Bar & Grille, and was looking to add one more fun event to the restaurant at Highland's. He saw 8minuteDating featured on NBC's Today Show, and called the company to set it up locally.

Although an 8minuteDating event was set up locally for December, it was postponed because not enough people signed up in advance. A minimum of 10 women and 10 men are needed to put on the event.

"But the conflicting part was that there was such a buzz in town about it — I got a huge number of calls and questions from men and women of all ages who were interested," he said.

The price to register for the event is \$35, which Skadron said may seem steep, but as the officials at 8 Minute Dating say, "You get eight dates for \$4 each. You're not stuck in a six-hour date that's really bad, and you don't have to pay \$200 for dinner and a movie."

Daters show up at Iguana's Bar & Grille on Tuesday night and are given a card with their first name on it, and then proceed to a table to meet their first "date." For eight minutes the couple chats, and then, when a bell rings, they part, jotting down quick notes about their date and proceeding to the next table to chat with someone else.

There are three categories each date can be placed in, "date," "friendship" or "business." Skadron said 8minuteDating isn't just about relationships — sometimes it can be meeting future friends or business connections.

"You're really nervous for the first date, during the second one you're a little nervous, and by the third you're laughing," Skadron said, after being sent to Denver by 8minuteDating to see how an event worked. "The whole thing is comical — this is dating in the 21st century."

After four dates there is a halftime mingling period, followed by four more dates. When everyone leaves for the night, they use the 8minuteDating Web site to record what categories they placed their dates in. The matchmaking happens on the Internet: Only dates who match each other's categories are sent e-mail addresses for the people with

whom they are compatible.

“If you didn’t want to date someone who wanted to date you, there’s no way for that person to get in touch with you,” Skadron said.

Of course, in the small town that is Aspen, is there ever really anonymity?

Skadron said not only are there plenty of new people and visitors to Aspen all the time, but this event is open to everyone in the Roaring Fork and Vail valleys. The suggested age for participants at this event is women, ages 26 to 40, and men, ages 30 to 44 — although no IDs are checked at the door. According to 8minuteDating, their research shows that women prefer dating men a few years older, and men prefer women a few years younger.

Preregistration is required for the event by going to 8minutedating.com, but Skadron said that if anyone decides to attend the party at the last minute, he’ll fit latecomers in.

“This holds the possibility that your Valentine’s Day may be better,” he said. “It’s no-pressure, it’s really relaxed, and it’s guaranteed — if you’re not matched with anyone, you can come to the next party for free.”

The party begins at 7:08 p.m. on Tuesday night at Iguana’s Bar & Grille. For more information, visit 8minutedating.com, or call Jeff Olson, manager of Iguana’s Bar & Grille.

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