

THE POST ONLINE

An independent student-run daily newspaper serving Ohio University, Athens and the surrounding communities



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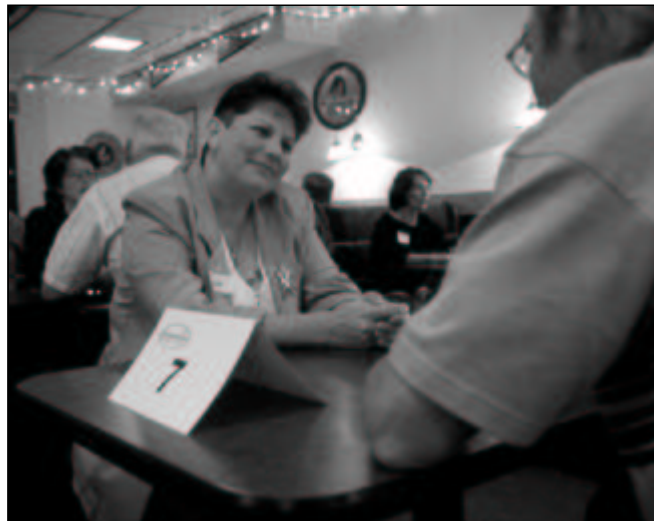
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Today's Edition
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*Geoff Hauschild
Staff Photographer*
Gina Sherrick talks with
Don Nuzum last night at
the Red Brick Tavern for
"8 Minute Dating."
Singles spent the
evening moving among
tables, munching on
food and mingling with
one another.

Middle-aged Athens-area singles mingle

*by Teresa Pione
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For older singles in southeast Ohio, meeting people often requires more than going down to the local watering hole, or meeting your best friend's boyfriend's cousin.

As Internet sites gain popularity and dating shows are catapulted into the limelight, the nationwide <http://8minutedating.com> program hit Athens earlier this year to ensure opportunities for all.

Last night, 26 bachelors and bachelorettes age 40 to 60 from Athens and surrounding areas departed from their small towns to the Red Brick Tavern, 14 N. Court St., to engage in the nationwide eight-minute dating program.

Sharon Stewart and Gina Sherrick arrived in Athens in tandem to spice up their usual Tuesday night outing.

"We always go out on Tuesdays anyway," Stewart said. Normally the Thelma and Louise duo frequent bars in their hometown of Logan, but they noticed the prospects for dates are slimming.

"We're running out of people to mess around with," Sherrick joked.

Joe Vititoe of Wellston was upbeat and also looked forward to seeing some new faces. He said he already knows most of the single women in his town, so it is rare to meet someone new, especially at the bars.

Most do not look forward to sifting through smoky, loud bars crowded with 20-somethings in order to find their soul mate.

"It's tough when you haven't dated for 20 years and you're kinda thrown back into it," John Schmittaur of Millfield said. He said he enjoyed the program, saying that it was easier when

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you knew you were on a schedule.

Eight minutes with each person is exactly the amount of time it takes for a connection to be made, said Tammy Claussen, an OU broadcast graduate and the coordinator for the Web site. Claussen organized the first of this type of event for 20 to 30 year olds earlier this year, followed by a March date night for 40 to 60 year olds. Although the younger crowd was scarce, the older daters proved eager, she said.

"As soon as I posted it on the Web, 10 women signed up," Claussen said of last night's event. She handed out cards and a check sheet for the participants to mark whether they preferred someone for business, romance or friendship. If you really want to see someone again, she advised, check all three.

Claussen also encouraged the daters to enjoy the food and drink and relax, because nervousness can be a pitfall. Claussen cited an instance last time when one person drank too much to get rid of his nervousness. But she has not had any disasters.

"If they're outgoing enough to come to something like this," Claussen said, "they're probably pretty well together and confident."

Playing the role of cupid comes naturally for Claussen, who rang the bell at each interval and energized the candle-lit room with her inquiries, "Is everybody having a good time?"

Smiling faces and laughter affirmed they were enjoying themselves, and Gina Sherrick looked giddy. "I've met somebody I've checked all three on," she said. "It was really fun."