

A little help with the **DATING GAME**

Local matchmaker to star in A&E reality show

by **ELIZABETH TAUFA**
Reporter

There's an old saying that you don't have to have a lover on Valentine's Day, you just gotta have love.

While this may be true for some, it isn't for Patti Novak.

"I really do believe that people shouldn't be alone — that they should be together," said Patti Novak, owner and operator of Buffalo Niagara Introductions. "There are a lot of lonely and alone people out there, and they're nice, beautiful people."

The Tonawanda businesswoman specializes in old-fashioned matchmaking, using her intuition and wits — not a computer system — to pair up individuals. She has clients from throughout Western New York and even Canada.

"My style is different than some of the other matchmaking services out there," Novak said. "I don't just throw numbers together."

The matchmaker said her business is not about desperation — that people who come to her simply do not have many ways to meet people.

"In your later 20s, if you're tired of the bar scene and you don't want to use the Internet, where can you go?"

Her clients range in age from early 20s to the 60s. She helps those with little or no experience in the dating world to those who are divorced or widowed to those who just haven't found the right person on their own.

Novak knows all of her 400 currently active clients and prides herself on her ability to work firsthand with clients, evaluating their strengths and helping them work on their weaknesses.

Clients who sign on with BNI give and are given feedback after being matched up for a date. Based on that feedback, Novak discusses what individuals can do differently to



WNY matchmaker Patti Novak has a reputation for being realistic but caring with her clients. She has over

400 active clients throughout Buffalo, Niagara Falls, all suburbs and even Canada.

Photo by Ken Bartolotta

make themselves better players in the "dating game."

Before taking on a new client, Novak does two interviews, a preliminary one over the phone and a more extensive second interview in person.

There are requirements for being accepted at BNI. Individuals must be looking for an exclusive relationship (not necessarily marriage), they must be gainfully employed and they must be ready for a relationship — meaning they are emotionally disconnected from their last serious relationship.

Then, Novak gets to know her clients.

"I learn a lot about people from their relationship history," she said. She also matches people according to personal preferences, religion, age, and smoking and drinking habits.

According to Novak, the first date should be a casual activity such as a walk around the canal. However, in the winter months, she suggests that the first date be a casual drink, though not a coffee date.

"Coffeehouses can be uncomfortable for women," she said, noting that the direct eye contact and fluorescent lighting aren't ideal for first impressions.

After a first date, clients must ask Novak if the other party is interested in a second or third date. However, after the third date, she cuts clients loose.

"If you go on a third date, you'll go on 10," she said.

She also handles all rejections after the first couple of dates.

"It's the hard part of the job," she said. But Novak won't break up for people who have been in a relationship past the first few dates. Novak has received a reputation for being "Simon Cowell-like," a distinction she considers to be untrue.

"You can't be in this business and not have people like you," she said. Novak says simply that she's realistic when it comes to her business. If potential clients are not proud of their appearance, then she is

reluctant to take them on.

"Chemistry is physical," she said.

Novak is currently working with Sharp Entertainment Production and A&E on a reality TV show chronicling her business and her WNY clients.

"There is a growing number of singles in the Buffalo area," she said.

There were some hang-ups on her part about doing a reality TV show, and she noted that the production company has had some difficulty in getting some successful BNI clients to open up about their experiences.

"They're just very private," Novak said.

The business is separate from the TV show, however. Novak says that people who want to procure her services without the extra attention are welcome.

For more information about BNI call 694-8585 or visit the Web site at www.buffalonia.com.

e-mail: etaufa@beenews.com