

# How Mountain Singles Meet

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The methods and services used in big cities to match singles do not work when applied to our mountain communities. The services are often marketed to an extended region that includes ours. But if we use those services, even if they can find a match, the match will be between a mountain resident and a city dweller, not between two mountain residents.

What works in a semi-rural area like ours is basic, old fashioned, face-to-face contact. Mountain folk meet by crossing paths through community or work, making eye-contact, starting conversations, and then starting relationships.

If we were to improve on this basic method of meeting, it would be to bring singles together at mixers, events, and activities. There, they meet in the ways they are accustomed to meeting, only more often. The strategy doesn't change how the singles meet and interact, but improves their chance of success.

We can systematically go through other methods for pairing up local singles, and rule them out as being less effective than a simple mixer. Methods include:

*Matchmaking*

*Internet dating*

*Promoted events and outings*

*General activities*

## Matchmaking

It would be so nice to have a service of some kind to locate us a good mate.

*Matchmaker, matchmaker make me a match,*

*find me a find, catch me a catch.*

*For Papa, make him a scholar.*

*For Mama make him rich as a king.*

*For me, well, I wouldn't holler,*

*if he were handsome as anything.*

Unfortunately, matchmaking is totally unrealistic, other than some networking among friends, and blind dates.

I paid \$3000 to Great Expectations once, and got exactly one date I'd like to repeat.

Years ago, there was a matchmaking service in Los Angeles claiming to have extensive personality testing and human matchmakers, backed up with dual-mainframe computers. I signed up for the service about a month before it was shut down by the district attorney. I paid my fee, took their personality exams, and never heard from them again.

One computer match specialist actually says that he has "*studied the brain science behind love through years of anthropological research.*" If someone had made a breakthrough in this regard, it would be all over the scientific and popular literature. Speaking as someone who subscribes to science magazines, I haven't seen a shred of relevant news. However, one can hazard some cash to find out if this specialist really has something to offer to "*find that perfect someone.*" Reviews written by people who have tried the service reveal just about what you would expect. They are trying to get their money back.

Rarely do computer match programs cross-check the match. In other words, the program will find a person who meets your criteria, but fails to check whether you meet the other's criteria. That means you are apt drive out to meet your perfect match, only to be rejected instantly. Few of us would be so shallow and callous as to assign pairs almost at random. But if the operators cross-checked their matches, they wouldn't have enough matches left to stay in business. I think the operators sell the idea of "*35 dimensions of compatibility,*" so that a pair selected at random will think their match has hidden magic.

## Internet dating

The Internet is perfect for two researchers working on the same topic, and located on opposite ends of the earth. That is what it was designed for. It is far less effective at screening potential mates within a 30-minute drive.

An Internet search using key words like "*singles*" and "*Lake Arrowhead*" mostly turns up Internet dating outfits. There are a lot of them. A casual search turns up about two dozen: *Mingle, Matchmaker, Yahoo, True, Chemistry...*

Some of the Internet dating outfits attempt to appear as if they are based locally. They call themselves "[*Your City*] *Singles*" in hundreds of cities. It does wonders for their web traffic. In our case there is a "*Lake Arrowhead Singles*." Finding a website with a name like that would seem to be a eureka! moment for anyone single and living in Lake Arrowhead. But dig beneath the surface. If they were truly based in Lake Arrowhead, they would have a selection of singles from our area, not from Riverside.

None of the Internet dating outfits have a sizable collection of singles from our mountain communities. They promise "*thousands*" of singles from "*your area*," and immediately list singles living elsewhere, as if the price of not being single is to move off the mountain.

Even if Internet services had a significant selection of local residents, (without stuffing their roster with non-existent people) the idea of Internet dating is still a gimmick. In writing one's post to go on the Internet, it helps to be mysterious, and reveal little of substance. Describe yourself as a *pirate seeking accomplice for midnight raid*, to at least get some chatter going. A famous "*dynamic redhead*" once got several hundred responses. I'd be honest in my post, and land a few dreary responses spread out over four counties!

## Promoted events and outings

One event promoter writes: "*To Meet Someone Interesting You Need to DO Something Interesting!*" I disagree. They would have you shell out money to buy a relationship, when what they are going to deliver is kayaking. There are a lot of interesting people out kayaking, and it can make a great trip. But the chance of meeting a compatible mate on any given trip is pretty minimal. If you do find someone interesting, one of you will have to relocate in order to continue the relationship.

I took a singles cruise in the Bahamas once that had four men and 16 women. The odds would seem to be fantastic for the men. But it seemed to me at the time, only one of the 16 women was interested in a relationship. That relationship ended with a letter after returning home. I think she lived in Texas. Why take a cruise in the Bahamas in order to mingle with 16 single women, all of whom live in other states, when right here in town one woman in three is without a wedding ring?

Big-city promoters may occasionally look at our area, but will probably go for more money elsewhere. I found a slick promotion on the Internet targeted to our area. They offer "*everything from speed dating, dance lessons, football parties,*" and more. The website looked real, but all it did was swallow my demographic and contact information, and then direct me to a broken link. It was probably not a phishing scheme, but rather a low-budget method of determining potential business in our area; They are counting hits at a fake website in order to see how much business a real website would draw.

## General activities

Popular advice for meeting singles is often something like: "*Get out of the house and into contact with others. Take a class, go to museums, play a*

*sport, join a book club, volunteer, learn a craft.*” A medical worker found she could start conversations on her lunch break with people she didn’t know, by drinking apple juice from a urine beaker. A woman attracted to firefighters went to all the local fire stations in her area asking for travel directions.

This can be a lot of work in return for scant results, especially if you are hesitant to seize an opportunity, or to network through married folk to locate a single. Most activities have a general cross-section of participants, not necessarily the singles you are looking for. Women and men tend to go to different activities. You can spend years at a variety of activities without finding a mate. Pick activities you like, so that going home empty-handed won’t feel so bad.

There is merit in this approach, though. It is indirect, but is starting to get at what actually works.

## **What actually works**

The way people actually find mates, away from big cities, is the same now as it has always been. In sequence, they (1) cross paths through work, community, or recreation, (2) make face-to-face contact, (3) start talking to each other, and (4) out of their conversations start relationships.

To be effective, an organization intended to pair up mountain singles has to be structured around the way our singles actually meet; The organization has to bring singles together where they can meet, face-to-face and talk.

General activities (classes, museum trips, taking up a sport) accomplish the same end, but not as often. They are not geared for bringing singles together. Internet dating, speed dating, and other wacky schemes can sometimes work in cities, where millions of people are packed together. But they don’t work in our area, where they would have to recruit a much higher percentage of the population in order to have a viable pool of members.

Even in big cities, based on my own experience, the most effective way of meeting other singles is face-to-face at singles mixers. There was an academic mixer in Santa Monica that I liked, and a couple of large mixers in Los Angeles where I had some success. I miss the one in Santa Monica, as it is now too far away for me.

There are various venues or formats for bringing singles together where they can meet and talk. The most direct is a mixer, with the attraction of food and company, and not too much noise so that it is easy to talk. Another format is special interest groups, where a single can invite other singles who share an interest. There are local outings, organized by local singles. Outings provide more exposure time, and make it possible to literally bump into each other. Some people like small, quiet events. Others like a big gig with deafening music. The best singles organizations offer or link to all of those, because what breaks the social ice for one person is different from what works for another.

Lyrics are from *Fiddler on the Roof*.