



make me a match

The idea for an article on matchmaking on the Eastside started last fall when in the span of just a few weeks I received numerous inquiries from Bellevue Club members asking about services or forums we could provide for singles. These members pleaded that they weren't interested in spending their only free hours combing profiles in the plethora of online dating sites. They simply wanted a trusted source to help them make connections with like-minded people, in this case other members.

While I felt for those members, it wasn't a feasible project for us at the time. But when another member introduced me to Peggy Bennett, a personal matchmaker who specializes in helping Eastside residents find love, I realized the topic was more relevant than I had thought, and I had to share her story with our readers and members.

As she says many people do, when I first met Bennett, I made an immediate comparison to Patti Stanger, the celebrity matchmaker made famous by her big personality and successful Bravo reality show *The Millionaire Matchmaker*. And Bennett doesn't necessarily shy away from the comparison. After all, like Stanger, Bennett prides herself on being extremely selective and straightforward with her clients.

However, Bennett stresses that she veers away from Stanger's style in that she is much more discreet—and a good deal sweeter.

"I have directiveness," Bennett says. "That's why I call my business Straight to the Heart. I offer clients coaching, wardrobe and even body language advice and tips. I'm pretty assertive, but I'm like the nicer version of Patti. I genuinely love people, and I love being in the people business."



WRITTEN by LAUREN HUNSBERGER //// PHOTOGRAPHY by MICHAEL MATTI

In further explaining her unique approach, Bennett also makes it a point to differentiate herself from the surfeit of matchmaking sites that so many singles in her target demographic protest out of distrust. “There’s definitely a customer for those online sites,” Bennett says. “But my client is one who wants to be more selective, private and efficient with their time. I screen everyone, so clients have a sense of security of who the people are. They will also have a sense of security knowing they can trust who I am.”

An Eastside native herself, Bennett, who met her own husband on a blind date set up by a mutual friend, launched Straight to the Heart in December 2014 but has always enjoyed the art of playing Cupid. “I have a natural instinct for it. I can easily read people’s energy, and I don’t think that’s something you can be trained to do,” she says, who for many years has worked as a personal wardrobe stylist for Nordstrom, a profession she says is strangely similar to matchmaking.

“They are both all about the one-on-one relationships, and that’s what I love. Nordstrom wardrobing is a one-on-one setting, and by doing that you’re spending a lot of time guiding clients, and they tend to open up,” Bennett says. “I often have single clients open up and ask, ‘By the way, do you know of anyone who is single?’ It was a very natural progression. It all came together, all my skills and talents.”

So what is the actual process of making it into Bennett’s database? Anyone interested in Bennett’s services can register through her website. Afterward, Bennett conducts an in-person interview, where she discusses exactly what the client is looking for in a partner and relationship. This process not only clarifies what the potential client is looking for but also ensures they are a good fit for Straight to the Heart. Bennett prides herself on selecting singles with strong family values who are looking for a long-term partner.

“I talk to them about their career, demographic preferences, children and family, personal values, how they were raised, travel and so on,” Bennett says. Once all the details have been hashed out, Bennett offers clients three options, ranging from an (unpaid) Women’s Only to a VIP Membership, which includes dating preparation guidance and styling advice, among other benefits.

But no matter the level of membership, Bennett offers all of her clients a few tips up front, such as don’t bring your stress with you on a date, don’t drink too much and hold off on sex. “That’s not part of the signed agreement, but I feel strongly about telling them to hold off on sex because they just won’t be successful,” she says. “If you’re looking for a long-term relationship or marriage, I’m going to offer the advice to dig deep and find out who they are first.”



Bennett stresses that when couples listen to this advice, they are better able to recognize a true soul mate. “There is chemistry and then there are soul mates. Some people are fooled by chemistry alone. Women specifically can be swept off their feet, and that can maybe last through the engagement. But if you don’t have that solid base, those feelings of ‘I feel like I’ve known you my whole life,’ it may not last. True love runs way deeper than sexual chemistry.”

The last thing that Bennett stands firm on is not showing pictures to clients before they meet. She doesn’t want to allow for any preconceived notions or judgments to seep into the process. “Only I get to see that information. I’m really blessed in that I have my clients’ trust. And I honor that by making the match based more on character values, interests.” So for all of those who reached out to us, I entreat you to contact Bennett and consider her your personal headhunter of love. ■

➔ For more information about Straight to the Heart, Bennett and her services, please visit straighttotheheart.net.