

Antidote for heartbreak

February 10, 2005

Ain't Valentine's Day

Tomorrow, 7 to 10 p.m.
Revolving Museum Lab
22 Shattuck St., Lowell
Suggested donation \$5
www.revolvingmuseum.org
978-YES-ARTS

There's a new Valentine's Day trend starting to pop up in Massachusetts and across the country. The holiday is not just for couples anymore. The time has passed when single people are expected to stay home alone on Valentine's Day, lamenting their failed love lives.

Along with several books and websites, Lowell's Revolving Museum is trying to make Valentine's Day enjoyable for singles, with a new take on the "girls night out" and "guys night out" concept. They focus on curing heartache by having singles get together and share humorous stories about failed attempts at finding Mr. or Ms. Right, as well as spending time doing something for themselves.

Tomorrow's gathering at the Revolving Museum Lab will be the first "Ain't Valentine's Day." The loosely structured program will begin with stories by Matt Studivan from Outlet magazine, a recent graduate of Emerson College with a degree in acting.

To begin the night and open up the floor to personal anecdotes, Studivan will present a monologue based on the funny and interesting stories of unsuccessful romance and bad dates he heard about while interviewing people in Lowell.

In a format similar to an open-mike night, people will be encouraged to relax, meet new people, and share their songs, poetry, and stories about failed attempts at finding love. Anticipated topics are tales about bad blind dates, sad but funny breakups, and other stories that follow the anti-Valentine's Day theme.

"We kind of wanted it to feel like you were just sitting around at your friend's house eating and drinking and talking about everything that's going on in life," said Kiki Kelley, gallery and events manager at the Revolving Museum. "Nothing makes it easier to get over your horrible love life than listening to other people's misery."

To fit the theme, the lab will be decorated with black roses, oversized hearts bearing antilove themes, and one-liners designed by Dennis Ludvino of Renovation Journal. Work from TAG, the museum's teen art group, will also be displayed. There will be refreshments and a raffle throughout the night.

"I think it's mostly going to be people who are trying to come and cheer themselves up and do something different," said Kelley.

Although Kelley does not know of any other event of its kind in Massachusetts, people across the country are finding their own ways to make Valentine's Day fun for single people, too.

Author Sasha Cagen suggests a whole new holiday. Cagen, the author of "Quirkyalones," a book for those who reject the notion of romantic relationships, is trying to spread the idea of "International Quirkyalone Day." The celebration would fall on the same day as Valentine's Day. As part of the festivities, people who are not in relationships are urged to throw parties to celebrate being single.

For those who do not have the interest or time to throw a party, AnnaMaria Stephens and Maya Kroth of Signonsandiego.com suggest indulging in chocolate, taking a boxing class, renting a good DVD, or going bargain hunting to combat a broken heart on the day when happy couples seem to be everywhere.

MaximalHappiness.com suggests that those who decide to celebrate Valentine's Day pamper themselves, trade Valentine cards with friends, or try something new such as picking up a hobby, cooking a new dish, or working on an improvement project.

The whole idea is to dispel the notion that the only way to be happy on Valentine's Day -- or any other day -- is to be in a relationship.

"From a psychologist and a feminist perspective, I think our society is very focused on the notion that if human beings are not in a relationship, there's something wrong with them," said Dr. Khanh Dinh, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell's College of Arts and Sciences. "This may be a reaction to the status quo of how we think about what makes a full life for human beings, what makes them happy."

DONNA NOVAK

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