

# The Press of Atlantic City

TRENDS / GETTING TO KNOW HIM IN 8 MINUTES OR LESS / SPEED DATING EVENT OFFERS SINGLES CHANCE TO HOOK UP

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Byline: By COURTNEY McCANN Staff Writer, (609) 272-7219

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## ATLANTIC CITY

Jeannine Lenhart hasn't had a date in nearly two years. It took a group effort to get the 40-year-old divorcee from Hammonton to attend Wednesday night's 8 Minute Dating event at the Planet Rose Cocktail Lounge. Her mother signed her up and paid the \$35 entry fee. Her niece set up the profile. Her friend Claire Brown dragged her to the bar.

"I actually was at my computer planning to write and say I wasn't going to go," Lenhart said. "And then (Brown) called and told me I had to go. She called me a bunch of times asking if I was getting ready and when I was leaving."

Lenhart sat at the bar, tucked away in a corner of The Quarter at the Tropicana Casino and Resort, nervously clutching a notebook and pen. A small white tag bearing her name and a number matched those stuck to the shirts of 15 other middle aged singles milling around the dimly lit room. Brown, along for emotional support and to make sure she didn't bolt, sat next to Lenhart, sipping a cocktail. "She's just so shy, and she never really gets out," Brown said. "I'm meeting men online and going out on dates every week. It's time we got her out here and back in the dating scene." Just as Lenhart was asking Brown to take her name tag so she could leave, event organizer Ed Lincoln took microphone in hand and invited the singles to take their seats at eight numbered tables. With a glance back at Brown, who raised her cocktail as a show of moral support, Lenhart prepared herself for a whirlwind of dating.

The 8 Minute Dating events are a version of speed dating, the latest trend in dating for singles who are too busy to date, or aren't able to go out and meet people on a regular basis. Speed dating gets these singles together and has them go on several short dates in one night. At Wednesday night's event, the women sat at individual tables,

while the men rotated from table to table every eight minutes for eight short dates. Everyone kept a score card to indicate whom they would be interested in for romance, friendship or just a business relationship. After the event, the daters go home and log on to the 8 Minute Dating Web site to post their results. In the week that follows they can check their status and see if they have any matches who would be interested in another date.

Lenhart returned to the bar just over an hour later, face flushed and excited to report her impressions:

Guy No. 1: "He was very career driven. He talked a lot about what he did for a living. It was hard to talk to him because there were a lot of one-word answers. I had to draw information out of him, and that was hard for someone shy like me."

Guy No. 2: "He was very kind. He had just moved here and was doing this to meet people. That date was easy because he did a lot of talking about himself. I just kept asking him questions. It took the pressure off me."

Guy No. 3: "He was also very kind, just not my type. He was another one I had to kind of pull things out of him."

Guy No. 4: "He wasn't born here but has been here for about 16 years. He's done this speed dating thing before so we mostly talked about his experiences with that."

Guy No. 5: "He was an insurance adjuster and very serious. He was a little too serious for me, actually."

Guy No. 6: "He was very friendly and talked a lot. He had been married before and had kids. He was really great, but just not my type."

Guy No. 7: "It was a long eight minutes. He was an attorney and kept saying weird things like, 'We have a lot in common because you're not drinking and you're not driving.' I guess he was trying to pick up a lot of things about me by studying me, which was really strange."

Guy No. 8: This is the guy I would probably go on a date with again. He was so nice and a very good listener. We had a lot to talk about. He was actually still talking when the date ended, so we sat there for another few minutes.

As the two women prepared to leave Planet Rose, Lenhart looked relieved. She had come, she had seen and she

had conquered. Lenhart plans to post her results online this weekend. Then she'll wait to see if anyone, maybe lucky No. 8, is interested in another date. But if no one responds, Lenhart says she'll still be happy that she put herself out there for the experience.

"I might not see any of these guys again, but it was great to get out, meet some new people and just get used to dating again," Lenhart said. "And this format was great. On a normal date you're stuck there. With this, you get to keep going right on to the next guy."

**Illustration:**

1. Jeannine Lenhart of Hammonton attends the 8 Minute Dating event at Planet Rose Cocktail Lounge in The Quarter at the Tropicana Casino and Resort. Nervous going in, Lenhart met seven guys who justified her fears. Then came No. 8 ... Color photo

2. Claire Brownb, right, of Galloway Township, supports her friend Jeannie Lenhart of Hammonton at an 8 Minute Dating event at Planet Rose in The Quarter at the Tropicana Casino and Resort. Press photos by Sharon Stabley

To e-mail Courtney McCann at The Press: [CMcCann@pressofac.com](mailto:CMcCann@pressofac.com)