



# SINGLE IN ST. LOUIS

Tips, tricks, and trends for going solo

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This year, we took a break from our annual Top Singles contest to compile a package of inside info on the dating scene. From a dating coach to statisticians, happily married couples to local singles themselves—and two romance writers besides—we checked in with a variety of experts to bring you advice for making the most of the single life in St. Louis. —M.S.

## In Defense of Singledom

We wrote—and you complained. Last year's singles feature in *SLM* prompted a perturbed response from some local singles, who took to Yelp to kvetch that we implied marriage and other deeply committed couplings are the sine qua non of existence.

"How about an article on the joys of being single?" asked Angela S. "I find that I'm constantly defending my relationship status like it's something broken that I should be trying to fix. Is it so hard to believe that someone would enjoy being single? Maybe I like being able to come home when I feel like it. Maybe I like never having to apolo-

gize for playing 'Danger Zone' on repeat while I get ready in the morning. All I'm saying is that there's a lot to love about being single." (And there's a lot to love about a gal who admits her fetish for the *Top Gun* soundtrack in a public forum, we'd venture.)

Dean B. offered that his married friends "ask me where I'm going to travel next, what I've been cooking, what kind of house projects I have going on, what I'm doing over the weekend, etc. Although they don't say it, I feel as though they're envious of the single life and wish they had the time and freedom that it affords. (Continued on p. 102)

### PUTTING YOURSELF OUT THERE

You know the saying: "You have to put yourself out there." But where, exactly? We compiled places where you can find like-minded individuals, no matter your passion. —R.E. & N.M.

**LITERATI:** Engage in passionate discussion at literary groups through Left Bank Books ([left-bank.com](http://left-bank.com)), the St. Louis Public Library ([slpl.org](http://slpl.org)), or the St. Louis Writer's Guild ([stlwritersguild.org](http://stlwritersguild.org)).

**AUDIOPHILES:** Volunteer with Jazz St. Louis ([jazzstl.org](http://jazzstl.org)), catch a

# Dating for Do-Gooders

(Continued from p. 101)

"I encourage all singles to follow my philosophy of giving up and committing to a life of living alone and yelling at people on the Internet," he added.

Angela S. is Angela Smith, 27, who does social media for the Humane Society of Missouri. Dean B. is Dean Berry, 33, an analyst at Wells Fargo.

Now, get this: After complaining about our implication that only the coupled are worthy of enjoying life, Smith and Berry commiserated their way right into each other's arms. They've been dating for about a year now—since the last Top Singles issue.

Rich, rich irony aside, the duo remains adamant about the joys of the single life.

"I don't think we need to feel like we have to spend our life searching," Smith says. "Some people can't fathom that you would want to be single, but really, it's one of the best times of your life. There's something to be said for waiting, as you learn about yourself. Right after college, you might feel like you have to get married, but there's a big learning period a lot of people miss out on if they do. Life is not supposed to feel like a ticking time bomb.

"Also," she adds, "if you get the family-dinner box from Pizza Hut and you live alone, you can eat it all by yourself and it will last a week."

"What I enjoy most is being able to set my own schedule," says Berry. "I don't have to check in wherever I go. I make my own decisions with my life and my money. There's a lot of independence—just knowing that I can pick up and go. I can let my place get as dirty as I want, and no one's nagging me about cleaning, either."

That said, Berry isn't quite as single as he used to be. We mention how funny and smart and cute we think Smith is.

"I know," he says. "She's hilarious. I love her."

Aww... —B.K.

## OUR TOWN IS WILDLY PHILANTHROPIC:

In terms of charitable giving, the city ranks 17th out of 366 cities nationwide, according to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. And so it is that our social calendars are chockablock full of evenings out in black tie or a little black dress—outings that have been known to spark a romantic match.

Rachel Lockhart-Korris had been alerted by a good friend on the Young Zoo Friends board that another member, Jermal Seward, had some serious boyfriend potential—and that he was attending the 2009 Zootini. He came late; Lockhart-Korris wasn't feeling well and considered leaving before Seward arrived. "Then I thought, 'Nope, I'm going to stick around, because this guy might really just be the one,'" she says. They married in October 2011. In lieu of party favors, the couple donated money for a brick at the Saint Louis Zoo's south arrival pavilion. Along with their names, the inscription thanks the zoo for introducing them to each other.

Sarah Kramer (a 2006 *SLM* Top Single) first laid eyes on Jassen Johnson in spring 2007, at

A Tasteful Affair for Food Outreach. But the connection ended there. He was in a relationship; she was moving to Rhode Island. In autumn, she returned—and ran into Johnson at a bar. "Because I'd seen Jassen at the Food Outreach event, I had the courage to pursue him at the bar," Kramer says. "He texted me a few weeks later, and our first date was to a Food Outreach fundraiser." They married in May 2009.

It took a charity event for Ann Davidson and Mike DeBerge to see what had been brewing for years. He was president of the Young Friends Board of Friends of Kids With Cancer; she was on the board of Launch St. Louis, a nonprofit that helps charity boards start young friends groups. Last December, DeBerge's group held a holiday party and toy drive. "We chatted for quite a while," Davidson says. "The next day, he asked a mutual friend for my number. We started dating shortly thereafter." The couple—together ever since—just relocated to Chicago. —C.M.



**WEB EXCLUSIVE:** Visit [stlmag.com](http://stlmag.com) to read about a couple who met in the Peace Corps.



## STILL PUTTING YOURSELF OUT THERE



show at Plush ([plushstl.com](http://plushstl.com)), or take a music class at Folk School of St. Louis ([folkschoolstl.org](http://folkschoolstl.org)). In warmer weather, don't miss the Missouri Botanical Garden's Whitaker Music Festival ([mobot.org](http://mobot.org)).

**THEATER CONNOISSEURS:** Usher or act with theater groups like St. Louis Actors' Studio ([stlas.org](http://stlas.org)) or First Run Theatre ([firstruntheatre.com](http://firstruntheatre.com)). Or try an open mic at The Venice Café ([thevenicecafe.com](http://thevenicecafe.com)).

**OENOPHILES:** Attend wine classes at The Wine Merchant ([winemerchantltd.com](http://winemerchantltd.com)) or The Vino Gallery ([thevinogallery.com](http://thevinogallery.com)). Try tastings at Robust ([robustwinebar.com](http://robustwinebar.com)), Grapevine Wines



## GAME CHANGERS

If you haven't played the dating game for three decades, the board sure looks different. Online dating services fill every possible niche, from VeggieFishing.com to the Apple-inspired CupidTino.com. Not to mention virtual dating on OmniDate (*omnidate.com*), or the new apps that tell you about the eligible someone who's standing, quite literally, right around the corner. Your mother's rules might need refreshing. —J.C.

### 1. "IF THEY'RE LOOKING THAT HARD, THEY'RE DESPERATE."

False. Studies have shown that as a segment of the population, Internet daters are more likely to have high self-esteem and low social anxiety. They're just busy.

### 2. "MEET SOMEONE THROUGH FRIENDS OR AT CHURCH."

Not necessarily. A Stanford University study found that of straight couples who'd met between 2007 and 2009, 21 percent had met online.

### 3. "DON'T SEEM TOO EAGER."

False. We're living in the age of instant response.

4. "YOU'RE TOO PICKY." Possibly. But if you have a dealbreaker (age, religion), use it to narrow your search.

5. "DON'T BE TOO CHATTY." Still true. Experts warn of oversharing in the bio, of being too negative, of giving TMI.

6. "BE CAREFUL." More true than ever. Look into employment and marital status; check Missouri Case.net ([www.courts.mo.gov/casenet](http://www.courts.mo.gov/casenet)) for lawsuits or a criminal record. As for mobile-dating apps, they're an invitation to those on the prowl. Try LikeBright (*likebright.com*), which only shows you the whereabouts of friends of your Facebook friends.

**Sources:** *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, August 2009; *OkTrends*, 2010; *Computers in Human Behavior*, September 2008; "How Couples Meet and Stay Together," Stanford University, 2010



**WEB EXCLUSIVE:** Visit [stlmag.com](http://stlmag.com) for more dating tips.

# The Dating Coach

**FOR 22 YEARS, ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT** listened to unhappy couples bicker in her office, giving her insights into how to build stronger relationships. She became The Dating Coach, she says, to "help people get off on the right foot, so that when they encounter the inevitable difficulties, they know what they can do about them."

Today, rather than offer advice about where to meet other singles or how to fine-tune singles ads, Vaillancourt teaches clients to uncover their best self first and *then* to find their better half. In fact, before working with clients one-on-one, she asks them to complete a series of classes to work through heartbreaks and hang-ups, as well as to identify what they really want in a partner:

She does have a few simple suggestions for singletons, though, like 34-year-old Darren, whose profile she dissects on her dating blog, My Soulmate Project (*mysoulmateproject.com*). He *LOLs* and *hehes* his way through some sad facts, like spending most of his nights hanging out with Netflix. (Note: Sad sack self-deprecating humor is about as attractive as high-water pants with

threads stringing off the hems.)

"I think of it as marketing," Vaillancourt says. "Show, don't tell... Instead of just giving a list of adjectives—which I see so much on online profiles—tell them a story, or show them something with a word picture you paint of those qualities."

Online dating can be a minefield for completely the opposite reason, too: People so often present a false self (and, um, a photo circa 2002). Which is why "a lot of what's going on online is all projection," she notes. "You fall in love with your imagined ideal."

One of the best things people can do, she says, is adopt some fresh thinking about singleness. She's posted stats on her blog that show there are plenty of eligible bachelors and bachelorettes floating around in every age bracket. They're not all on OkCupid or registered for speed-dating night. They *do*, however, have to buy toilet paper and get their oil changed like everyone else. "There are single people everywhere," Vaillancourt says. "Men and women meet at the Home Depot." —S.R.

(*grapevinewinesandspirits.com*), Wines of Wildwood (*winesofwildwood.com*), Saint Louis Cellars (*saintlouiscellars.com*), or Sasha's Wine Bar (*sashaswinebar.com*); singles abound.

**POLITICALLY MINDED:** Check out a Young Friends of St. Louis Public Radio (*st/publicradio.org*) event. If you're more partisan, you might try Drinking Liberally (*livingliberally.org*), an After Party with the St. Louis Tea Party Coalition (*stlouisteaparty.com*), or the monthly St. Louis Republican Party Meetup group (*meetup.com/republican-109*).

**OUTDOOR ADVENTURERS:** Those with an itch for adventure and a love of the outdoors can meet via Events & Adventures (*eventsandadventures.com*), whose local chapter



# How to Write a Sex Scene

**WHEN YOU'RE TRYING TO CAPTURE EROS IN INK**, there are *more than 50 shades*. Two St. Louis writers speak from opposite ends of the spectrum. —J.C.

*Julie Lessman's won a long list of awards for her historical, inspirational family sagas. She calls herself "the black sheep of Christian romance."*

"I'm a fade-to-black kind of gal, like the old movies. My raciest scene was probably the characters Colin and Faith [after marriage]. He was a rogue—he slept with everybody before he came to Christ. He wanted her to quit her job, so he was trying to get her pregnant—this is 1920. She said he was a drooling baboon and sex was all he wanted. He got hurt and did not approach her for three weeks. That constant affection and sexual tenderness she craves, it's gone. So she puts on the nightgown she wore on their honeymoon, lets her hair down, and walks in.

He's reading the Bible. She leans over and kisses him, making sure he sees the swell of her breasts. He keeps reading. She leans into him, presses her breast against him. All of a sudden he says, 'What are you trying to do to me?' and he's kissing her. He does kiss her here [she gestures toward her décolletage] and then he

'descends.' That scene has gotten me I don't know how many one-star reviews."

*St. Louisan Brenda Wright, author of Angel: A Hustling Diva With a Twist, is at work on her third novel.*

"Some of the ones I wrote were ones I've tried myself. My sisters said, 'You've got to talk to us about this stuff so we can try it!' I like a lot of the Kama Sutra positions—they get really intense. Or try the banana split. You go in your refrigerator—you have strawberries, whipped cream, cherries, caramel, fudge. You chop up some pecans and walnuts, and let him put that all over you and just eat it up. My husband liked that one. I told him I'm the banana.

With my characters Angel and Ramon, she wanted to do it on the beach, but he wanted to make love to her in private. So even though she got drunk on the beach, he took her back to the house. When they went in, he got buck naked, and she followed suit. He laid her down on the edge of the bed and started kissing her... then started to have oral sex with her. And Angel had her legs up on his shoulders. She's a Colombian assassin. Ramon asked her to marry him, but she ain't decided yet, because she's still runnin' around killing people."

## HOW (NOT) TO WRITE A MISSED CONNECTION

You locked eyes, you flirted, but you didn't get the digits. Now what? Post a Missed Connection ad on Craigslist ([stlouis.craigslist.org/mis](http://stlouis.craigslist.org/mis))—or check whether there's one for you. Here are some tips for reconnecting. —R.E.

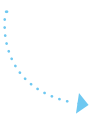
**USE MEMORABLE DETAILS.** "You were a drunk little hot blond who was hiding out from all the cops in my truck waiting for your ride," writes one Craigslist poster. Such details ensure he'll find the right girl again—maybe. "You were pretty tanked so you probably won't remember anything."

**CLARIFY MISUNDERSTANDINGS.** This guy starts with a memorable detail: "You saw me get tazed." Not the best opener, but he rushes to explain. "Hey baby, I'm sorry you had to see that, but you know I'm innocent, girl. They ain't put the receipt the bag... And no worries, they didn't charge me with nothin but I can't shop at the Gap with you anymore."

**MAKE SURE IT'S A MISSED CONNECTION.** "I really enjoyed hooking up with you today in the park. Wish I had gotten your number or something so we could do it again." That's not a missed connection. That's—we're not sure what that is.

**LEARN FROM MISSED CONNECTIONS.** Reading the Missed Connections section should teach you one thing (after you get over the affront of not seeing a single ad for yourself): You must conquer your nerves and make the connection when you have the chance.

### PUTTING YOURSELF OUT THERE YET AGAIN



does everything from camping to cruising the Mississippi River.

**ATHLETES:** If you're the athletic type (or looking for someone who is), there's a team sport for you. Try the

co-ed Kickball STL ([kickballstl.net](http://kickballstl.net)), Big-Balls Kickball League ([leaguelineup.com/stlbigballs](http://leaguelineup.com/stlbigballs)), or the LGBT-friendly Team Saint Louis Rainbow Kickball League ([team.saintlouis.org](http://team.saintlouis.org)). For

golfers, Fore!Singles ([foresingles.org](http://foresingles.org)) offers tournaments, socials, and even bowling during the winter months. Prefer indoor sports? Try St. Louis Skee Ball ([stlskee.com](http://stlskee.com)) or darts at Blueberry Hill

([blueberryhill.com/darts](http://blueberryhill.com/darts)).

**OTHER:** Don't see your particular predilection? There are Meetup groups ([meetup.com](http://meetup.com)) for almost every interest,

from St. Louis Spiritual Singles to Singles Cinema. Local alumni groups also regularly host events—or if you're from out of town, look into Metropolis St. Louis ([mstl.org](http://mstl.org)). 📍