



BETTING ON LOVE

The odds are good you'll at least help good causes at Valentine's Day B&B Benefit Bash



By Marcia Manna

They say money can't buy love, but adventurous singles willing to pony up the highest bid can win a date at the Valentine's Day B&B Benefit Bash at the Belly Up Tavern Wednesday night.

Among the bachelors and bachelorettes to be auctioned are Nikki, a business development manager for an architectural firm, and Ted, a professional dancer who deals in real estate.

Christophe is the CEO of a biotech firm who likes to play the guitar, and Kira is enamored with the Padres and her job.

"I love what I do," said Kira Finkenberg. "I'm the owner of a concert marketing company that specializes in event production. We handled the opening night of Justin Timberlake's world tour, and recently, I've taken on the Prince 3121 project at the Rio in Las Vegas.

"I'm at all the shows in a working capacity, doing everything from marketing and promotion to organizing press coverage."

On Valentine's Day, there will be a mingle with the singles before the bidding begins. Here's the way it works:

View some of the 20-to-40-something bachelors and bachelorettes online at www.buymelovebenefits.com. Those who buy a \$50 VIP ticket get premiere seating, hors d'oeuvres and a complimentary cocktail. Bidding starts at \$50, and winners are entitled to receive a customized dinner date with the bachelor or bachelorette.

Christophe, for instance, plans to escort his date to George's at the Cove, then visit a comedy club. Finkenberg will bring her date to Island Prime Restaurant on Harbor Island, then it's off to the 2007 Legends Party at Seu's the Restaurant.

The Benefit Bash is the brainchild of Lindsay Trowbridge and Diane Michael, who jokingly refer to themselves as "bachelorettes No 1 and 2."

Two years ago, they created the Puppy Love Party, a singles social that attracted more than

Kira Finkenberg is one of the bachelorettes up for bid at the Valentine's Day B&B Benefit Bash at the Belly Up Tavern. *Laura Embry / Union-Tribune*

500 people and raised money for the North County Humane Society. Its success inspired the duo to launch a singles event company and the Valentine's Day Benefit Bash.

"We have 11 guys and nine girls," said Trowbridge. "It's about putting yourself out there to meet new people who may or may not be 'the one.' We don't promise love, although it could happen. We do promise the opportunity to meet singles and the chance to make a difference."

The difference comes into play with the charity aspect of the auction. All bidding proceeds will be donated to the bachelor or bachelorette's charity of choice.

"What's so wonderful about this is that the event will benefit 20 charities," Trowbridge said. "In Kira's case, her auction proceeds are going to the San Diego Sports and Medicine Foundation. Then, she'll match whatever is raised and donate that to the Judy Finkenberg Memorial Fund. It publicizes her charity and makes the option even more exciting. It's like doubling your impact."

The Judy Finkenberg Memorial Fund was established to help foster children get an education.

"My mom recently passed away, and she helped hundreds of foster kids," said Finkenberg. "She was an elementary school teacher and a believer in education. The foundation helps pay for her former foster children to go to college."

Contributing to good causes such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the Children's Hunger Fund and Voices for Children contributes to the feel-good atmosphere.

But perhaps the biggest reason this event is popular is because it's a night filled with all those unspoken scary what-ifs that unite singles: What if my date smokes, stinks or gabs nonstop on a cell phone? What if the person I want is snared by another?

Then, there's that faint hope: What if I meet someone really nice?

Finkenberg said she has a plan for suppressing all the what-ifs that plague chance meetings.

"I've never done anything like this," she admitted. "I have to remember that it's just for one night ... and that it works in the movies."

Marcia Manna covers North County arts and entertainment for the Union-Tribune.

DATEBOOK

Valentine's Day B&B Benefit Bash 7 p.m. Wednesday, The Belly Up Tavern, 143 S. Cedros Ave., Solana Beach; \$30 to \$60; (858) 481-8140 or www.buymelovebenefits.com