



Illustrations By Pete McArthur

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Why are you single?

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The question, phrased bluntly or subtly, has been asked as long as there have been mothers to ask it. The answers are varied and plentiful. With the nation's divorce rate hovering around 50 percent and careers that demand ever longer hours, more men and women are remaining single for significant portions of their lives—and many are quite happy that way.

In this month for valentines, we've compiled a package of stories exploring the single life in New Jersey. We talked to singles who embrace their solitude and make no apologies for it. We traced the triumphs and travails of online dating, an increasingly popular way to meet a mate. And we provide plenty of other ideas for finding that special someone, should you so desire.

Of course, being single in the suburbs, where the married-with-kids model prevails, often requires a little creativity if one longs to forge personal connections. Fortunately, one benefit of living in this densely populated state is that you're never too far from people who like to do the same things you do.

Singles can find other singles through common interests, whether they're outdoor adventures like kayaking, biking, or rock climbing, or artistic endeavors like singing, painting, or acting. You can join a book club or a social group within your religious affiliation, or just hang out at a local dog park, where you can mingle with fellow pet-lovers while your four-legged friends make some connections of their own. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

THE NEW SINGLES SCENES

By Patricia Simone

So you haven't found Mr. or Ms. Right tooling through the frozen food section or perched on a bar stool at happy hour? Wish you could find someone who shares your love of hiking or volunteering? It might be easier than you think. Just figure out what you like to do and then find a place to do it. There's a good chance that someone nearby shares your interests.

1 Like to ski? The Garden State Ski Club (973-478-8722; gardenstateskiclub.com), established in 1958, consists of more than 400 mostly single people. Besides great skiing options, the club offers a year-round schedule of other sports, including rollerblading, golf, tennis, bicycling, and canoeing. While the club welcomes skiers 21 and over, most members are between 30 and 60.

WANTED: New Jersey's Most Desirable Singles

Do you know an eligible bachelor or bachelorette? That great friend or colleague you'd marry if it wouldn't violate the laws against polygamy? Or that nice co-worker whom you'd be thrilled to pair off with your son, daughter, dad, or mom? Later this year we'll spotlight the state's most eligible singles. Tell us in 75 words or less what makes your nominee one of New Jersey's most eligible singles. We're looking for men and women of all ages.

[Click here to submit a nomination](#)

2 If water is your thing, the 21-year-old Hackensack River and Canoe and Kayak Club (201-287-1970; geocities.com/hrckc) includes a mix of families and singles with all levels of experience. In addition to leisurely day trips, the club features expeditions to wild spots such as Georgia's Okefenokee Swamp and the Florida Everglades.

If the ocean calls to you, spend the day aboard the Cape May Whale Watcher (800-786-5445; capemaywhalewatcher.com). Or schedule sailing lessons at Off-Shore Sailing in Jersey City (800-221-4326; offshore-sailing.com) or the New Jersey Sailing School in Point Pleasant (732-295-3450; newjerseysailingschool.com).

3 If you're at home on the range, then gallop over to one of the hundreds of stables throughout the state. Singles groups like Parents Without Partners (Ramapo Chapter, 973-831-1535; parentswithoutpartners.org) organize lessons and trail rides, while Spring Valley Equestrian Center in Newton (973-383-3766; springvalleyequestriancenter.com) lets you choose between English and Western riding styles and supplies the necessary safety headgear.

4 Tennis anyone? Groups throughout the state set aside court time for singles. As many as 70 players attend Net Set's (908-580-9777) weekly singles sessions at Maywood Tennis Club, which include three to four hours of court time and food for about \$28.

Racquet Buffs (racquetbuffs.com) meets at the Binghamton Racquet Club in Edgewater, Tiger Racquet Club in West Caldwell, and Packanack Lake & Tennis Club in Wayne. According to founder Marvin Furman, more than 25 couples have met and married through his tennis parties, and while some of the attendees are couples, most are singles from 30 to 55 years old.

5 More and more New Jersey singles have increasingly demanding work schedules that leave them little time to date or socialize. Enter the Biz-to-Biz Cafe (201-818-8913; biztobizcafe.com), an organization that hosts regular evening meetings in various North Jersey locations for busy professionals who want to establish business/social relationships with like-minded people. And Toastmasters International groups for singles (toastmasters.org) will help you enhance your communications and leadership skills.

6 Dinners by Dana (973-680-1099) organizes face-to-face dinner meetings for single professionals in Nutley. Guest lists are evenly split between men and women ranging in age from 35 to 55.

On a smaller scale, Spectra Singles (spectrasingles.com) orchestrates casual lunch or dinner meetings for single professionals who want to try new restaurants in Essex, Morris, Bergen, Middlesex, or Passaic counties. Each gathering is planned for eight to twelve people in their thirties or forties.

7 If sports or networking isn't your thing, consider other options. Take a professional development course, like this month's Landmark Forum (landmarkeducation.com) in South Plainfield from the 24th through the 28th. And check out Rider University's College of Continuing Studies (rider.edu). Or join a theater troupe, such as the Bergen County Players (bcplayers.org) in Oradell; there are plenty of backstage jobs like set design, decoration, makeup, lighting, and manning the box office for those who shun the spotlight.

8 Seeking community-minded singles? Volunteer. The Food Bank of South Jersey (foodbanksj.org) holds a Sort Night twice a year—a great way to meet others while helping those in need. Berlin-based Caring Singles (caring-singlesj.com) organizes blood drives, charity work for homeless shelters and orphanages, and other social-service projects. Table to Table (tableto-table.org) is a food salvage program that disbursed more than 4 million meals to needy New Jerseyans last year.

[Click here for more Singles in the Burbs](#)