

# MATCHMAKER MAKES A LIVING LOOKING FOR LOVE

BY LISA VAN DE VEN

They say that practice makes perfect, and in Ruth Claramunt's case it just may be true.

Claramunt has made her living as a matchmaker for 15 years, meeting with men and women and finding their perfect match. But even prior to that, Claramunt was an expert in love — after all, she's been married to her husband, Danton, for 34 years. She met him when she was 12 years old, now the pair have three children and four grandchildren.

"I wish I could clone him," says the owner of the matchmaking service Hearts.

Since that's an impossibility, though, Claramunt has made it her business to find the perfect match for everyone who asks. Today Hearts, located at Avenue Road and Lawrence Avenue, has a client base of about 1,000 men and women. But that doesn't mean Claramunt has lost the hands-on approach she's had since she started the business.

Claramunt doesn't believe matches can be made by typing a few facts into a computer. She personally meets with each one of her clients, sitting down in their homes for an hour or two to discuss their interests and what they're looking for in a match.

"I think by sitting in their homes, I really get to know who they are," says Claramunt, who matched her own daughter with one of her clients.

From there, she matches each person with someone in the same age bracket and with similar interests. She also keeps in mind what type of look each person is looking for, since chemistry is an important part of any relationship.

While many matches have worked on the first try, Claramunt says, others have not — which just means she'll try again. Clients are encouraged to date someone a few times — if it's not the person they're looking for, they just keep trying.

Don't settle for something less than the real thing, she says.

"Your mate should be your best friend," Claramunt says. "Don't settle for anything less than what you're looking for."

She's pleased with the results she's had. Many of her clients end up marrying, and Claramunt usually has plenty of weddings to attend.

One of the reasons for her high success rate, she says, is the fact that she's picky about the clients she takes. Unlike typical dating services, where sales people earn commission to bring in more clients, she has made it a policy to only accept people who are interested in pursuing a serious relationship, and who meet her own personal scrutiny.

"I want nice, honest, intelligent people," she says.

It's difficult to meet someone in today's world, Claramunt says. People are working longer hours so going out to meet people is more difficult. Others are working at home, where it's difficult to build up a social network at all.

"People go to experts in all areas of their lives. This is my expertise," the matchmaker says. "Instead of going out looking, they're going out dating."

Always a romantic, Claramunt started matchmaking innocently enough, when she thought her secretary would get along well with her husband's co-worker. A match was made.

"I've never looked back," she says.

Eventually, she started working part-time at a matchmaking service, with the idea of learning the business to eventually buy it out. That business became Hearts.

Now she has clients from all over the world, in all age ranges.

And what has she found is the key to a successful relationship?

"It's the little things that make a relationship work, not the big things," she says.