

DOW	S&P 500	AMEX	NASDAQ	T-BCNDS
9,517.26 down 128.14	1,013.60 down 17.14	908.55 down 6.48	1,497.18 down 33.51	5.55 30-yr yield down 0.06

'Love is the foundation of everything'

Turning singles into a pair of hearts

Matchmaker goes beyond 'superficial'

By ALLISON PRIES
STAFF WRITER

Always Ayelet saw it time and time again as a matchmaker at a national dating service in Manhattan.

On paper, the couple matched perfectly: They were both successful, in their 30s, and well-educated, but maybe he was a few inches shy of her ideal height.

That's all it took for him to be passed over.

As founder of Universal Connections, Ayelet believes her Englewood Cliffs firm is the answer for the romantically challenged. "There's something more to making a good match than the superficial qualities that clients were looking for," she says.

At Universal Connections couples or singles seek the advice of Ayelet, an astrologer and a member of the National Council for Geocosmic Research (a Spring Valley, Calif.-based astrological organization with 5,000 members in 26 countries) on love and getting to know themselves.

Since Sept. 11, "people are looking for answers and they need love," says Ayelet. "Love is the foundation of everything." The sentiment has boosted business by more than 20 percent compared to last year for companies that provide dating services, according to The Right One and Together Dating Service, which is in Columbia, Md., and says it is the largest dating service in the world.

In New Jersey, there are dozens of places that promise they can help you find lasting love, and

BUSINESS Q&A

more are cropping up. Ayelet stumbled on a unique concept by combining astrology and counseling that can help a client look at why he or she thinks and reacts a certain way.

Using a client's birthdate, time and place of birth, Ayelet develops a natal chart — which she describes as "a blueprint of the psyche" — and counsels a person on how those seemingly irrelevant facts shape one's personality. Her goal is to help clients "increase consciousness and heighten self-



DON SMITH/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Always Ayelet, founder of Universal Connections, in her Englewood Cliffs office. Since Sept. 11, she says, "people are looking for answers"

awareness so that they attract, accept, and find more emotionally appropriate connections."

"I'm not a psychic," Ayelet says. "I have the ability of seeing hidden truths through my study."

The first step, and the crux of Ayelet's mantra: "We must accept ourselves unconditionally ... so that we can find someone who can best compliment us and fulfill our deepest need of love."

Universal Connections projects revenue of about \$500,000 annually. Its 13 services range in price from \$50 to \$1,995, depending on the length and options. The three-year-old business attracts mostly professional men in their 30s and 40s and professional women in their 20s and 30s. Ayelet says she arranges about 100 matches per week for her roster of about 1,500 clients. The success rate, defined as both parties expressing interest in a second date, is 95 percent, she says.

"It's the next best thing to your friend introducing you," she says.

Q. What made you pursue this business?

I love matching people and I think a lot of people are looking for answers [in their love life]. The fastest, most effective way to get real is to look at yourself through the use of astrology. Most of my clients are busy with their career and life but have no one to share it with.

Q. What makes Universal Connections unique?

No one is bringing astrology to the corporate awareness and my corporate mission is balancing life with love.

Q. How do you attract clients?

Through word of mouth.

and need love. Ayelet believes that by combining astrology and counseling, she has been able to put her clients on the path to romance.

Q. Who are your clients?

They're well-educated, successful professionals [such as financial analysts, lawyers, and physicians] who live in Manhattan and northern New Jersey.

Q. How are the matches arranged?

I take care of all the arrangements for where and when to meet. No personal information is disclosed. Prior to the date, I give each person the other's first name and a brief general biography, which includes age, what the person does [but not the company he or she works for], and what qualities he or she is looking for. Then, after the meeting, both people have to call the next day and tell me what they liked or why they didn't like

the match because I use that information to fine-tune the process.

Q. How does one become a client?

I work by appointment only so we set up an initial hour-long interview to see what they're looking for. I won't take a client unless I have a potential match for them.

Q. What are your plans for the future?

I hope to open a Manhattan office within the year. Then, the West Coast is the next stop. I want Universal Connections to be recognized as the nation's leader in developing true connections and the source for love-centered life.

Allison Pries' e-mail address is pries@northersev.com