

Open your heart

Local matchmaker to host Lock and Key Singles Party

Lisa Darsonval wears a lock and holds a key at the Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club in Carpinteria, where during the Lock And Key Singles Party on Sunday, men will break the ice by using keys to open locks worn or held by the women.



STEVE MALONE/NEWS-PRESS

By DAVE MASON
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Guys, it may never be this easy to unlock your true love's heart.

Men will hold the keys — literally — at an upcoming event where the women will wear locks around their necks. It's all part of the third Lock and Key Singles Party noon to 3 p.m. Sunday at the Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club, 3300 Via Real, Carpinteria. The fee, \$22 in advance and \$32 at the door, includes a drink, appetizers, valet parking and viewing of that day's two polo matches. The goal is to find a mate that fits.

Lisa Darsonval, owner of Santa Barbara Matchmaking, the business behind the party, said she would tell men attending the event: "I did all the work for you and got all the women. You just have to show up!" The dating coach laughed.

Even if the men and women don't immediately see fireworks, at least they'll get a chance to win more than \$2,000 worth

of prizes. Every time a man opens a lock, both the man and woman turn in the key and lock for tickets for drawings for restaurant certificates, services at salons, a massage, jewelry, books, tarot readings and more. The man and woman then get a new key and lock and can meet other people.

The man or woman who turns in the most keys or locks wins the Locksmith Award and free admission to two future Lock and Key Singles parties.

The first parties were attended by 30 people in October at EOS Lounge on Anacapa Street and 60 people in February at Kalyra By the Sea winery on State Street. Ms. Darsonval expects 120 people at Sunday's party. Typically people in their 30s to 50s attend the events but adults of all ages are welcome. Ms. Darsonval manages registration on her website, www.lockandkeyevents.com/sb, so that it's an even split of women and men. (If too many women register, she closes that part of the

Meeting people, winning prizes

website until the men catch up.)

The nice thing is there's no fear of rejection, Ms. Darsonval said. "Nobody says, 'No, you can't try to unlock my lock!' It just doesn't happen. Everybody is there for the same reason (to meet people and win prizes)."

If a man and woman decide they're not interested in each other, they simply part ways after turning in their lock and key, Ms. Darsonval said. But it's possible to meet someone you like a lot, she said, adding that she knows of two couples who started dating after meeting each other at the parties.

"There was this one couple (in their 30s); they were so cute and obvious," Ms. Darsonval said. "For the two of them, it didn't matter that there were 50 people around them. They walked out, connected with each other, arm in arm. They were really adorable."

"Everybody loves the event," she added, referring to notes she has read on her company's Facebook page. She said the men typically need more encouragement to go to the parties than the women, but both genders are glad they're there.

She said the key and lock are a good icebreaker and have inspired men to say funny pickup lines. (Keep them classy, guys, she advised.)

Sunday's party is among those presented nationally by Lock and



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When a key opens a lock, both the man and woman get a ticket for a drawing for prizes.

Key Events. Ms. Darsonval signed a contract with the company to hold the Santa Barbara parties. She said Lock and Key Events, which normally recommends holding the events in bars and publicizes them on its website (www.lockandkeyevents.com), never heard of one in a polo field.

"They said, 'Are you kidding me?'" Ms. Darsonval recalled. "I said, 'I know Santa Barbara; it's going to be popular.'"

The location of the upcoming event came about after the polo club contacted Ms. Darsonval, who started Santa Barbara Matchmaking on Valentine's Day

IF YOU GO

The Lock and Key Singles Party will take place noon Sunday at the Santa Barbara Polo & Racquet Club, 3300 Via Real, in Carpinteria. The event includes a drink, valet parking and viewing of that day's two polo matches. Advance tickets cost \$22. To purchase, go to www.lockandkeyevents.com/sb and type the promotion code NEWS in all caps. Tickets are \$32 at the door. For more information, call Lisa Darsonval, owner of Santa Barbara Matchmaking, at 699-5650. For more about her business, see www.sbmatchmaking.com.

in 2012 and was trained during seminars held by Matchmakers Alliance, a national nonprofit. The club asked her if she could host monthly Meet the Matchmaker events at the polo matches as a means of attracting singles. She persuaded the club to let her hold the Lock and Key Singles Party there this Sunday as a way of promoting the Meet the Matchmaker series. For the series, to be held the first Sunday of each month starting June 2 at the polo club, she will answer dating questions and oversee a game for singles.

For now, she's keeping the details under lock and key.

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