

Rent-a-spouse pairs people exploring human interaction

By TAMYE RIGGS
Of the Emerald

Seems like you can rent just about anything these days, from bicycles to clothes to records. One of the more unusual rental services is Rent-a-Spouse.

Now it isn't likely that O.J. Simpson will hurdle your shrubs and beat a path to your door, but the service may provide something that a single person may need on

'We wouldn't send a 16 year-old to mow a single parent's lawn.'

occasion: another someone.

Shirley Whitehead, the owner and operator, admits the name Rent-A-Spouse has raised a few eyebrows, but it catches the attention, which is the intent of most businesses. From Whitehead's point of view, the firm is aptly named.

As the name suggests, the firm explores avenues of human interaction other than just business relations. A member can call for someone to chop wood or darn socks, and may end up with a meaningful relationship in the bargain, Whitehead says.

However, Whitehead says, matches will be arranged between members of compatible emotional maturity. "We wouldn't send a 16-year-old out to mow the lawn for a young single parent," Whitehead notes. She stresses, however, that everyone who needs help will get it.

The aim of Rent-A-Spouse, according to Earnie Amabisca, public relations manager, is to pair job-seekers with those who need a specific service, such as lawn mowing, woodcutting, or babysitting. Members either pay cash or barter.

Although this service is not specifically geared toward students, Whitehead and

Amabisca hope to aim the business a little more toward the younger crowd.

"We're pretty much playing it by ear," Amabisca says. "Hopefully, we can eventually cater to everyone."

"Our heritage is based on people helping one another," Whitehead says. "I think we'll see more of that in the future."

Services available since the company's start in September include hostessing, entertaining, construction, woodcutting, counseling, accounting, grocery shopping, tennis lessons and political counseling.

Friendship is an added bonus to these services.

To become listed on the Rent-A-Spouse "service roster," applicants schedule an appointment with Whitehead and make a list of qualities they are seeking in a companion.

Whitehead, who says she is "a good judge of character," scrutinizes each applicant, questioning them about employment records, work qualifications and emotional stability. Whitehead also runs a credit check on each prospective member.

If the inquiry goes well, the applicant is granted admission.

Despite Whitehead's efforts to keep any questionable persons out, Rent-A-Spouse will not take responsibility for any mishaps between members. But then, there are exceptions, Whitehead says.

"If someone cancels a date, we'll find someone else to take their place," Whitehead says.

Members must pay a \$50 membership fee. After that initial investment, affiliates must shell out \$10 per month in dues.

According to Whitehead, all the fees go back into the organization and are used to fund the applicant checking system, matching services, and paperwork involved in the program.

Whitehead's rationalization for the high fees is to insure only exclusive clientele will

patronize Rent-A Spouse, she says. Whitehead says she believes only those seriously interested in long-term memberships will pay the prices.

Amabisca and Whitehead have differing views on what types of people will become the "average member" of Rent-a-Spouse.

From Amabisca's point of view, Rent-A-Spouse is for everybody — students, the unemployed, and the average odd-jobber. Whitehead says membership will consist mainly of single parents, although there will be a "wide cross-range of people involved."

"We're looking for reputable people, serious about the long-term aspects of Rent-A-Spouse," Whitehead says.

The concept of Rent-A-Spouse began when Whitehead owned Cedar Mills Construction and had a lot of contact with single people, she says. She acted as a go-between for personal acquaintances who were looking for certain services from her "contacts."

'Rent-a-spouse is for everybody — students, odd-jobbers and the unemployed.'

Whitehead rounded up 10 close friends and formed the business. As of yet, the "team" receives no financial compensation for their efforts. Whitehead claims the operation is a non-profit social organization.

"Rent-A-Spouse is a worthwhile social organization," she says. "I'd like to expand the idea as much as I can."

Will Whitehead take advantage of some of the services Rent-A-Spouse has to offer?

"It's not really my desire at this time," she notes, but adds, "I am single, and I do have free time, so it's a possibility. That's not my main goal, though."

Windmills working again

GOLDENDALE, Wash. (AP) — Two of the three giant wind turbines near Goldendale are again producing electricity after being shut down since early June when the third unit was damaged during tests, officials said Thursday.

The third unit, which suffered damage to its generator and drive train during a high-speed shutdown test June 8, is expected to be operating early next year, said John Lowe, director of wind energy programs for the Boeing Co., which built the turbines.

Boeing completed installation of the machines last May, a year after breaking ground for construction. Each unit is rated at 2.5 megawatts, or 2,500

kilowatts, and together they produce enough electricity to service about 2,000 average Northwest homes.

All three machines were kept out of operation while a team of Boeing engineers diagnosed the cause of the damage. Then a series of modifications were made to the hydraulic and electrical systems and to the operating procedures.

"We made about a dozen changes, none of them very significant in itself," said Lowe. "But we are certain that they add up to better, more truly redundant systems than before. It is part of the development process which is an objective of the test program."

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Limit on oil tanker size lifted

SEATTLE (AP) — Officials of Washington state's four largest oil refineries say lifting the oil tanker size limit on Puget Sound and its inland waters will have little practical effect on their operations.

"We have no plans to bring in anything over 125,000 tons," said Fielding Formway, manager of the Atlantic Richfield refinery at Cherry Point. It is the only refinery in the state with the capacity to handle fully loaded tankers over 125,000 tons, the

current size limit.

"I think the 125,000-ton limit was a stupid regulation based on emotion, not fact," said Bill Malseed, manager of the Shell refinery at Anacortes. "But if the limit is raised, it won't have much meaning for Shell."

Shell, the Texaco refinery at Anacortes, and the Mobil refinery at Ferndale can't accommodate oil supertankers with full loads because dockside water depth is too shallow.

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