



Social Group Celebrates 30 Years

By Dawn Nolan



Attendees of Speakeasy Singles' 30th Anniversary Dance enjoy moving to a combination of '80s mus

DAWN NOLAN | Gazette photos

It's a common question, and one that Nancy Sarver hears all the time: If I'm single and want to meet people, outside of the bar scene, where do I go?

Her suggestion? Speakeasy Singles.

The self-proclaimed "original social network" is a local community group that offers people 21 and older who are not married a way to "meet people, make friends and have fun." The typical age ranges from 35 to 70 years old, with the average being about 50.

"One of my biggest complaints is the people don't socialize anymore. They don't talk," said Sarver, who has served as Speakeasy's volunteer newsletter editor and jane-of-all-trades for more than five years. "We do, here."

More than 130 people celebrated Speakeasy Singles 30th anniversary Saturday evening at the Charleston Moose Lodge with a special dance and music provided by DJ Randy Damron.

"It was open to anyone, single or not, that had attended a Speakeasy event in the past," Sarver said.

Speakeasy Singles was founded on May 20, 1985, by Carolyn Stevens and Linda Geronilla, Ph.D. Sarver said it started as more of a casual meeting, a support group of sorts, where people could gather and talk in a comfortable atmosphere.

"Over 90 people attended that first meeting," Sarver said. "Over the years, though, it sort of evolved because people would start doing other things — laughing and having fun together. Now, we do a lot of social events — game nights, picnics, pool parties, we go camping, bowling, to ball games and take dance lessons."

The monthly dances, held the second Saturday at different locations around the area, are Speakeasy's most popular events and only source of income. There are 14 held

throughout the year, including special Halloween and New Year's Eve dances. No alcohol is served, and Sarver said a minimum of 80 people, in all stages of life, attend.

"We get a lot of people that are divorced who have lost a spouse, and it's the first time that they've gotten out in a while," she said.

Jerry Hash, who got involved with Speakeasy Singles in 2001 after his divorce, said the group is a "wonderful place for friendship" and has helped him and others through a tough time.

"They do a lot of good for a lot of people," he said.

Although it is a common assumption, that Sarver has heard all too often, she confirmed that the group is not a dating service.

"It's a common misconception," she said. "I'm not saying that people don't date, but that's not our goal. We simply want to have a good time, laugh and enjoy life."

For more information on Speakeasy Singles, call Sarver at 304-925-8024 or visit www.speakeasysingles.com. "Membership" is free, although if you want to receive a paper copy of the monthly newsletter, there is a \$16 fee. Stay up-to-date on events by emailing events@speakeasysingles.com.

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