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Free Jewish dating site attracts 1,000 GTA singles

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Special to The CJN

Yosi Leiba is a management consultant by day and a frequent dater by night. As the founder of MatzoDate, a new free Jewish dating website, Leiba hopes to help his fellow singles find love more easily.

While 35-year-old Leiba has been on various dating sites since 1997, he said he's never felt right about paying for the services.

"It should always be free in my opinion. There are a few adequate free dating sites out there, but none of them really cater to the Jewish community. Many of these free sites are slow, poorly designed and have a ton of advertising popping up," Leiba said.

After years of online disappointment, Leiba decided to take charge. He found some programmers and created his own free online dating site that he launched in February.

"I had the time and I had the desire because one of my close friends has always been very pro-Jewish and ended up getting engaged to someone outside of the Jewish faith.

"I figured there's a lot of people out there who don't want to pay the \$30 or \$40 a month for membership. So it made sense for me to help the Jewish community out and build a premium quality dating site entirely for free."

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate said MatzoDate is more of a hobby than a money-maker. In fact, he's not profiting from his site.

"It's actually costing me some money to support it, but I don't mind. I'm connecting Jews with Jews and hoping to bring down that assimilation rate," said Leiba, who lives in Toronto.

Leiba estimated that about 35 per cent of Jews in Canada are marrying outside of their faith, so he sees his website as a great service to people who want to meet Jews online, without the finan-

cial obligation.

"The more people that join the better. You will never be asked for a credit card or forced into reading annoying ads. All I hope for is that I bring some Jewish couples together and they have an awesome time," he said.

As a self-proclaimed professional dater, Leiba knew exactly how he wanted MatzoDate to look.

"I didn't want to be bombarded with advertisements. I wanted everything to be simple. I also wanted a really good chat feature.

"We built a lightweight chat module with code from all over the world, and in a couple of months, we put together MatzoDate."

There are other free Jewish dating sites, including Supertova and JsoulMate.com, but Leiba said he thinks his site is newer and fresher and offers users features that include being able to "block an annoying user" and get notifications to "get into a live instant-message chat session."

At first, MatzoDate wasn't attracting many users, so Leiba decided to put together a volunteer network to spread the word. He now has 30 people from across Canada and the United States who are actively involved in promoting the site.

"With these volunteers and with our social media launch at the beginning of March, we quickly jumped to about 1,000 users in the Greater Toronto Area alone. We've had an explosive growth. People are telling people. The growth is beyond my initial forecast."

There are about 3,000 active paying members in Toronto on Jewish dating sites, Leiba said.

Across Canada, there are just under 6,000. The fact that MatzoDate attracted 1,000 members in about a month is



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"quite encouraging," Leiba said. Mike Greenspoon, a MatzoDate user, joined the site in hopes of meeting someone special. He is also a member of JDate and eHarmony, but he said MatzoDate is "much easier and more compact to use and a much faster site in general."

Greenspoon said it's not easy meeting new people without the help of online dating sites.

"People are really shy in person, but very easygoing when they are talking to a computer screen."

Leiba said he's gotten excellent response from other members as well. "We have one person, believe it or not, who found the love of his life on MatzoDate. The one and only thing I ask for in return is that if any marriages develop from this site, please send me an invitation!"

Check out the site at www.matzodate.com.



Jenna & Alex



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