

LIVING



Cat Cantrill (left) meets with her client Joni Delaney on Jan. 3 at her office in Cedar Rapids. Cantrill founded The Heart Agency after closing her dance studio during the COVID-19 pandemic and is now a professional matchmaker. (Nick Rohlman photos/The Gazette)

FINDING LOVE

Cat Cantrill of Cedar Rapids finds her niche playing matchmaker for others

By Elijah Decious, The Gazette

Before she became a matchmaker there were times Cat Cantrill didn't believe in love.

Thirteen years after marrying her husband at age 22, the Arizona native found herself divorced and alone in Iowa with two children and few acquaintances.

Two failed relationships and myriad miserable dates followed that abusive relationship and nasty divorce. Ultimately, she found her way to Brian — her fiancée and partner of eight years.

During that time, she coached women at her Vitality Fitness and Dance Studio in Cedar Rapids where the pleas from her clients grew louder with the isolation of the pandemic. The

women she mentored holistically in dance and life wanted help finding their “Brian,” too. That's when she realized she had the ability to help people find love.

“I can bring the best out of people. And not only that, but I can see the good in everyone,” Cantrill said. “Why am I not using my talents to connect people in real life?”

So when her studio closed in January 2022 due to the pandemic, she opened The Heart Agency.

Now one year old, The Heart Agency in Cedar Rapids is more than a date coordinator.

HER PROCESS

For this dating coach, matchmaking isn't simply a game of romantic trigonometry. It's about helping matches gravitate toward each other naturally.

As a love doula, Cantrill says much of her work focuses not just on potential matches, but helping clients harness the best of what they already have

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Cat Cantrill meets with a client at her office in Cedar Rapids.

LOOKING FOR LOVE?

To find out more, visit theheartagency.com.

There, singles can join the agency's library of more than 600 singles for free and find upcoming speed dating events for Valentine's Day (theheartagency.com/events/will-you-be-my-valentine/) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Des Moines — all led by Cat Cantrill.

Cat Cantrill also offers advice through Dear Matchmaker (dearmatchmaker.com), ranked in the top 10 percent of podcasts on Spotify globally with thousands of downloads.



THINGS TO DO TODAY

POWERED BY HOOPLA:
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FAMILY FRIENDLY

Do Re Mi: Music and Movement for Kids with Down Syndrome

Ms. Amber is ready to share the beat with kids and their caregivers. Kids with Down syndrome and their families are welcome to attend.

- **When:** 9:30 to 10 a.m.
- **Where:** Hiawatha Public Library, 150 W. Willman St., Hiawatha
- **Cost:** Free

FAMILY FRIENDLY

Saturday Open Studio

For all children. Professional artists and musicians will be present to guide creative play.

- **When:** 10 a.m. to noon

- **Where:** Eastern Iowa Arts Academy Music and Arts Studio, 1847 E Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids
- **Cost:** Free

FAMILY FRIENDLY

Monster Truck Wars

See these giant superstars compete in non-stop action. The show will feature Outlaw, Shark Attack, Reptoid, and Sheriff competing in earthshaking, ground-pounding, highflying excitement.

- **When:** 1 to 3 p.m.
- **Where:** Alliant Energy PowerHouse, 370 First Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids
- **Cost:** \$10 to \$30

HOBBY Cedar Amateur Astronomers Public Night

Kirkwood Community College Professor Brent Studer will present “Winter Stars and a Deeper Exploration of the H-R Diagram.”

- **When:** 7:30 p.m.
- **Where:** Online with the Eastern Iowa Observatory and Learning Center (cedar-astronomers.org/events)
- **Cost:** Free

MUSIC

The RUSH Tribute Project

The RUSH Tribute Project is an homage to one of the most enduring and influential bands in rock music. The RUSH Tribute

Project (known as RTP to its dedicated fan base) delivers the magic of Rush's famous live concerts.

- **When:** 7:30 p.m.
- **Where:** Englert Theatre, 221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
- **Cost:** Free

COMEDY

All Iowa Comedy Showcase

See some of Iowa's brightest comedians — Mike Lucas, Justin Bulver, Matt Weis, Jen Kuhle, Zach Vaughan and Brandon Gale.

- **When:** 8 p.m.
- **Where:** The Lucky Cat Comedy & Events, 301 Second Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
- **Cost:** \$15 advance; \$20 door

Matchmaker/Time to reset your expectations to find love

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within themselves. “They bring it out themselves. I just give them the tools they need to do it,” she said.

Her services range from \$350 to \$4,500, depending on how much involvement a client wants. On the low end of pricing, she offers three months of sessions that help clients date more successfully on their own. On the high end, she offers full service for busy individuals looking for love.

Clients go through her “blueprint,” take personality tests, undergo background checks and go through a rigorous evaluation before being set up on dates. Cantrill said before dates, candidates are shown profiles of their match without a photo — a departure from the world of online dating where vanity metrics dominate.

For free, singles can join “The Library” on The Heart Agency’s website, where Cantrill has amassed profiles from more than 600 single people in the area.

When working with clients, Cantrill says she often first must reassure chronically single clients that there’s nothing wrong or “broken” about them that has left them single. Second, she helps them realize that they are deserving of love. For discouraged and frustrated daters, that is often a tearful realization.

Some of the initial steps in Cantrill’s process help clients identify their own personal traits and resets sometimes arbitrary expectations that have been set for their dating preferences by themselves and others, like friends or parents.

She also helps people identify their inner saboteurs — personal blocks that may have interfered with their ability to find long-term relationships in the past — and recalibrate their dating habits with practical advice.

For example, the idea of chemistry or “the spark” is mostly a matter of anxiety and brain chemistry, she said — not necessarily an indicator of whether a suitor is “the one.” You don’t need to wait three days after the first date to call back, either.

“Sometimes, the matchmaking piece isn’t necessarily bringing two people together,” she



Cat Cantrill founded The Heart Agency after closing her dance studio during the COVID-19 pandemic and is now a professional matchmaker. (Nick Rohlman/The Gazette)

“The happier you are ..., the happier the types of people you’re going to attract.”

Cat Cantrill, Heart Agency

said. “Sometimes, the matchmaking piece is the disconnect you have with yourself, and it’s rematching within yourself. Sometimes that’s all it takes.”

But finding the right match for long-term relationships is best done from a position of strength. To increase success in finding the right soul mate, she teaches singles to create romance in their own lives, first.

“The happier you are in your life, the happier the types of people you’re going to attract,” Cantrill said. “I help people (be) people again.”

Getting out of online dating that has become so prevalent for singles today and helping people develop their own interests, hobbies and joys is a great first step to do that, Cantrill says. For divorcees who married young and devoted their focus to raising a family, it’s a vital step, she adds.

It’s something Cantrill, now 48, realized she was missing when she started dating again after her divorce. Before finding Brian, rekindling her passion with dance helped her emanate the energy she needed to find the right match for love.

“I don’t want to just be part of someone else’s life. I deserve to have my own,” the

entrepreneur said. “Sometimes what we’re seeking in a partnership is what we’re lacking in ourselves.”

WHAT MAKES A GOOD MATCHMAKER?

Being in the business of people means you have to love people in every sense of the word, Cantrill said. That means creating a safe space where clients feel comfortable opening up, learn how to be vulnerable and find the courage to put themselves out there again. It also means listening without a bias and putting aside life experiences to truly listen.

Cantrill is certified through the Global Love Institute and is a member of the Matchmakers Alliance. But most of her training for the job came through her dance studio, where friends pushed her to realize how many long-term relationships and marriages she was responsible for helping.

“I was a matchmaker in that studio,” she said. “I created a space for people to come together, to have relationships with each other.”

ROLE OF DATING APPS

Online apps for dating have become a billion-dollar industry and a dominant force that has shifted the paradigm for singles. The paradox of choice has created so many options that singles often feel paralyzed. Those who find matches online often struggle with fear of missing out by “settling” for the wrong person.

Combined with a lack of vetting or background checks, it’s been the cause of a lot of frustration that simultaneously addicts users with stra-

tegic bursts of dopamine. Many apps, after all, are designed to keep people using them.

“It’s made people be really disgusted with people,” Cantrill said. “It’s given people permission to hide behind a screen, creating distrust and making people not want to connect.”

But online dating sites can remain an important tool in matchmaking if they’re used carefully. Rethinking the “types” of people one is drawn to and why is a big part of using the apps correctly, according to Cantrill.

Sometimes, successful dating means giving a second look to the profiles you might never think to “swipe right” on.

“If you find yourself in a cycle of poor dates, it’s not that there’s all these bad people,” Cantrill said. “It’s just you’ve trained the algorithm to deliver these types of people to you.”

WHY HIRE A MATCHMAKER?

Cantrill said people are intrigued when they find out she is a matchmaker. But her new career also faces a stigma as outdated and unnecessary. Clients can also be seen as desperate. But Cantrill likens The Heart Agency’s work to other professional resources commonly used in other areas of our lives.

“We hire Realtors to find the right house, financial advisers to manage finances,” she said. “But when it comes to love, you’re just supposed to know how to find a great match for you?”

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SAVVY SENIOR | JIM MILLER

A checklist of what to do when a loved one dies

Q. What steps need to be taken after a loved one dies? My 71-year-old uncle, who’s divorced with no children, has terminal cancer. He’s asked me to take care of his affairs, so I would like to find out what I need to do after he passes away. — Unsure Nephew

A. I’m very sorry to hear about your uncle. The death of a loved one can bring about a host of different tasks and responsibilities. Here’s a list of some things you can do now, and after his death, that can help keep a sad event from becoming even more difficult.

BEFORE DEATH OCCURS

There are several tasks you can do now while your uncle still is living that will make things easier for you after he dies.

For starters, find out where he keeps all his important papers like his trust and/or will (also make sure it’s updated), birth certificate, Social Security information, life-insurance policies, military discharge papers, financial documents, key or combination to a safe-deposit box or a home safe. Also make a list of his digital assets (including usernames and passwords) like his email account, online banking accounts, social media accounts, etc.

If your uncle doesn’t have an advanced directive, help him make one (see CaringInfo.org for free state-specific forms and instructions). An advanced directive includes a living will that specifies his end-of-life medical treatments and appoints a health care proxy to make medical decisions if he becomes incapacitated. In addition, you should also make a do-not-resuscitate (DNR) order. Your uncle’s doctor can help you with this.

You should also prearrange his funeral, memorial service, and burial or cremation.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH

Once your uncle dies, you’ll need to get a legal pronouncement of death. If no doctor is present, you’ll need to contact someone to do this.

If he dies at home under hospice care, call the hospice nurse, who

can declare his death and help facilitate the transport of the body.

If he dies at home without hospice care, call your uncle’s doctor. You’ll then need to call the funeral home, mortuary or crematorium to pick up the body. If your uncle is an organ or tissue donor, contact the funeral home or the county coroner immediately.

WITHIN A FEW DAYS

If funeral plans were not prearranged, you’ll need to make arrangements and prepare an obituary. If your uncle was in the military or belonged to a fraternal or religious group, you should contact those organizations too, because they may have burial benefits or conduct funeral services.

You should also notify family members, close friends and his employer if he was still working, and make sure his home is secured.

UP TO 10 DAYS AFTER DEATH

To wind down your uncle’s financial affairs, you’ll need to get multiple copies of his death certificate, which are typically ordered by the funeral home.

If you’re the executor of your uncle’s estate, take his will to the appropriate county or city office to have it accepted for probate. And open a bank account for your uncle’s estate to pay bills, including taxes, funeral costs, etc.

You also need to contact your uncle’s estate attorney if he has one; tax preparer to see if estate or final income taxes should be filed; financial adviser for information on financial holdings; life insurance agent to get claim forms; his bank to locate and close accounts; and Social Security, the Veterans Affairs (if he’s a veteran) and other agencies that provided benefits in order to stop payments.

You should also cancel his credit cards, delete or memorialize his social media accounts and, if relevant, stop household services like utilities, mail, etc. His home and personal belongings also will need to be dealt with in the coming weeks.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org.

How retired TV exec became publisher of National Catholic Reporter

By Deborah Netburn, Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — In his first column as publisher of the National Catholic Reporter, former television executive and journalist Joe Ferullo declared that the Roman Catholic Church is at a crossroads, pulled between two radically different visions for its future.

Writing in early December, Ferullo explained that a series of synods, or listening sessions, held in parishes around the world under the direction of Pope Francis had revealed a hunger among the faithful for a church that was more welcoming to its LGBTQ members and that allowed more op-

portunities for women to take on leadership roles.

And yet, in November, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had elected conservatives to nearly every important leadership role — including the group’s new president, Archbishop Timothy Broglio, who has served as archbishop for the military services since 2008. Experts who follow the church saw the election results as a pointed repudiation by the U.S. bishops of Pope Francis’ more inclusive vision.

“What path does the church take in the generations ahead? Does it expand the tent and reach out, or does it circle the wagons and close in?” Ferullo wrote. “It’s impossible to know where

that path will lead by the end of 2024 — but these next two years could easily turn out to be the most decisive since Vatican II.”

As publisher of the 59-year-old National Catholic Reporter, where liberal voices have long held sway, Ferullo will have a front seat to the unfolding historic drama that could affect the church for years to come. And perhaps that explains why a guy three years into a comfortable retirement might decide to take on the anxiety and thrill of running the scrappy and beloved Catholic news organization. He also believes that the future of the Catholic Church should be of interest not just to Catholics but to anyone

who follows politics in America.

“Despite the fact that the church is shrinking in numbers in this country, it still has a lot of influence,” he said. “If you’re angry at Dobbs, then you’re angry at the group of Catholics who helped push that, including all those conservative Catholic Supreme Court justices,” he said, referring to the court case that overturned abortion rights.

Ferullo, 65, describes himself as a lifelong practicing Catholic.

He grew up in the late 1960s in a working-class neighborhood in the Bronx, New York, where his family belonged to a parish that fully embraced the reforms of Vatican II. Latin Masses

were replaced with folk Masses that inspired him to learn to play guitar. The nuns at his parochial school removed their traditional habits, and his sixth grade math teacher, Sister Maryann, occasionally taught Simon & Garfunkel songs instead of long division.

“It was a very cool time, especially as a kid,” he said. “And it’s what kept me Catholic even as things became more secular around me.”

But around 2008 he found himself growing angry with the church. Catholic bishops were attacking Obamacare over contraception coverage, calling it a religious liberty issue. At the same time, the Vatican began investigating American nuns out of concern that

they were not acting Catholic enough. And although the church had started to confront its devastating sex abuse scandal, he was frustrated and disappointed that it had taken so long.

The National Catholic Reporter was founded in 1964 by Robert Hoyt, a journalist who wanted to bring the rigor of secular journalism to the Catholic world. “If the mayor of a city owned its only newspaper, its citizens will not learn what they need and deserve to know about its affairs,” he liked to say.

Today, NCR averages about 1 million unique visitors to its website per month and still is publishing a print paper sent out once every two weeks.