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The Washington, DC metro area's magazine for music, entertainment, nightlife and culture.

Out & About

Group of the Month
Meetin DC

written by
Joy Hopkins

There's no doubt a lot of networking groups in the area. Some are well-run; some are uncoordinated. Some are free to join; some charge membership fees. Some focus on a particular activity or interest. Some focus on professional connections; some focus on dating.

And then there is **MEETinDC**. MEETin is a social network that lives by the slogan, "Make friends, not money." MEETinDC began as a Yahoo! group in March 2003 as a way for people to connect in Washington. without the pressure or expectations of a business networking or dating site.

Even though the Web site is extensive and functional (features include classifieds, message boards, movie reviews, etc.) the essence of MEETin is that it is a "real life" group. There are nearly 6,000 members, and an average of 60 events each month including happy hours, concerts, hiking trips, dinners and game nights. And as if that wasn't enough, MEETinDC also has 11 sub-groups with events focused around specific interests such as volunteering, cooking or arts and culture.

Each chapter is run by volunteers in its city. There are no membership fees or event surcharges and the group welcomes everyone, regardless of relationship or job status.

Wayne, who has been group leader of MEETinDC since January, recalls his early experiences with the group. "Within the first six months of hanging out with MiDC, I made more 'friends' that I did my first year in D.C. We're not a dating site, we're here for the sole purpose of making friends. Four years later, and I'm still 'tight' with those members I met from the very beginning."

As an "early-adopter," Wayne has witnessed a lot of growth and change in the group.

"In the beginning, it was only a Yahoo! group for folks looking to hang out. Our founder Mikey probably had 10-15 people show up at his house for an event. Now, our official monthly happy hour easily surpasses 100 attendees each month."

Traveling? MEETin has you covered, with chapters in more than 90 cities across the country and around the globe including, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, Amsterdam, London, Paris and Sydney.

Kara, who joined in January, has hosted many events already including happy hours and theater outings. In fact, any member can host an event once they have attended three events to get a feeling of the often-referred-to "vibe" of the group.

James, 27, who has been a member since the early Yahoo! group days as well, says that MEETin is remarkable for its "For Us By Us" mentality. He also notes the vast infrequency of what he terms "the business card thing." James says, "I've hung out with people from MEETin for months without ever knowing what they do for a living."

Oh, and I've been a member for almost 3 years. My personal record is 11 straight days attending events.

To join MEETinDC, visit www.meetindc.org.

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