GET CONNECTED WITH SAN DIEGO SPEED NETWORKING

Mission Valley resident Melodie Tao has attended her fair share of networking events. She gets invited to mixers just about every day of the week.

After a while, Tao realized that even though the events she attended throughout the community were hosted by different organizations, they all had similar "mixer" concept. In an attempt to improve the design and create a more favorable outcome, she partnered with another local, Dennis-Michael Broussard, who shared a similar inspiration. The two established, San Diego Speed Networking.

Tao and Broussard researched different types of events and found speed networking to be a solution to maximizing connections in a fun environment. "If they're not structured correctly, networking events are an ineffective way to establish contacts," Tao said. Business networking events can be problematic or awkward.

Tao notes that such mixers are often at a bar or restaurant with loud music in the background.

"It can be really difficult to establish a connection with someone because with no formal introductions, you don't know who to talk to and there's no guarantee you'll meet everyone in attendance," she said.

San Diego Speed Networking, on the other hand, places companies, organizations and entrepreneurs in a more professional setting. Each company has two representatives at the event and they receive a table top where they will showcase their products, services and marketing materials. When the event starts one team member stays at the table while the other circulates the room, moving on to the next booth every three minutes until participants have met with each company in the room.

"You get to meet a lot of people quickly, in a safe environment where you can decide whether you want to pursue the relationship or not," Mark Goldman said. Goldman, a loan officer for Windsor Capital, participated in the first San Diego Speed Networking event in August.

Broussard and Tao cap the number of spots for the participants representing different fields to ensure that the event is not limiting the types of contacts that are made to one industry. Fifty table tops are available.

San Diego Speed Networking's next event is from 4 to 7 p.m. on May 29 at the University of San Diego's Institute for Peace and Justice. Registration is $40 per booth until April 30, after which it goes up to $60. The fee includes snacks and introduction by keynote speaker, Marc Carignan. StreamLight Video will film the event. Visit:

sandiegospeednetworking.com

for more information.

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