

FRIEND REQUEST

Using **online tools** to make real-world pals.

BY ANNE VICKMAN

It's no secret Boston is a tough place to meet people. A 2011 University of Michigan survey even named the city America's least friendly. But Carolyn Meenan and Jennifer Brooke hope to change that reputation with an online social event company they founded with two others.

Members of The Good Ones start by filling out a Personality SnapShot assessment, an online survey about lifestyle, interests, and values that Brooke created with a Harvard Business School professor. "People are frustrated with going to 20 events to find one person that they kind of connect with," says Meenan. "We use psychological elements that tell us about compatibility—if people would be a good fit for friendship, for working together at a start-up company, or for dating."

While many Boston get-togethers take place in (yawn) bars or restaurants, The Good Ones chooses more unusual venues, like art galleries or hair salons, places that inspire conversation. Events are capped at 85 and planned with consideration for factors in common, like age and education. Ticket prices range from \$40 to \$150, and the group is given clues about one another beforehand, but few details about the affair itself, in the hope that everyone will arrive with something to talk about.

"They told us that 80 percent of the people invited had been to five or more continents," says Lauren Creedon, a 23-year-old Boston entrepreneur who attended the first event in July. "The clues contribute to the comfort level." Creedon twice had brunch with people she met and



says more could become friends and business connections.

Small is one thing, but there's also something to be said for the en masse strategy. Since 2007, Daniel Heller has organized Guerrilla Queer Bar events in which LGBT participants choose a local bar or nightclub to "take over" for the evening. This



Daniel Heller (left) of the Welcoming Committee; Jennifer Brooke and Carolyn Meenan (above) of The Good Ones

summer, he unveiled the Welcoming Committee, a program designed with bigger targets in mind.

Take a Red Sox game. "Boston is a super-liberal city, technically speaking," says Heller. "But as a gay person, it still feels pretty uncomfortable to sit in the stands and hold hands with a same-sex partner." Using online networking tools such as Twitter and Facebook, his organization recently sold 100 tickets to a Sox game in 12 hours (Heller is working on an

app to let people in other cities organize their own events).

The events are not only fun, but "you also feel like you're giving something to the community," says Jared Milrad, a 28-year-old attorney who's attended several Welcoming Committee affairs. "It's not just another night out—you're promoting the idea of inclusivity."

Meenan likes that idea, too: "If we can connect more people with meaningful relationships, it could have a huge chain effect for the better." ■

Anne Vickman is a writer in Boston. Send comments to magazine@globe.com.

ABOUT FACE

It may come as a surprise to some that facial implants are a lot like off-the-rack suits: Finding the perfect fit can be a challenge. But thanks to 3-D imaging technology historically reserved for patients with deformities or injuries, Dr. Michael Yaremchuk, chief of craniofacial surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital, is now offering all plastic surgery patients customizable implants for chins, cheeks, and jaws.

While traditional implants often float over bone

and can be placed only in certain areas, Yaremchuk's made-to-order implants can be carved and affixed with screws and can eliminate the need to cut bone. As a result, his surgeries are precise, more predictable, and about 40 percent faster than traditional methods.

"Nobody around me can tell that I've had a surgery, but they can see that something is positively different," explains one of Yaremchuk's patients, a 30-year-old Boston woman who had chin and mandible implants (and prefers to remain anonymous). "It does not feel like a foreign body, but more like my own bone structure." As it should. Who wants an off-the-rack face, anyway?

—A.V.