

Social singles come together

By **WARREN FREY**
for Metro Vancouver

Vancouver's social singles had a chance to mingle and sample their options last week at Crush Champagne Lounge.

The Granville Street venue was the setting for meeting, greeting and promoting some of Vancouver's premier activity groups and entertainment connoisseurs.

The Social Event Showcase, the first event of its kind in Vancouver, was a chance for groups such as Urban Mixer, Social Empire, thevspot.ca, online dating services and other movers and shakers in the city's social sphere to hook up.

Frances Hui, who runs the Social Empire, said there's an unspoken desire amongst urban Vancouverites to connect.

"It seems like there's a lot of people in town who want to be social and do things," she said.

But she added the idea behind groups such as the Social Empire is to pre-screen potential members so

everyone in the group has a "base capability to interact, creating a level playing field."

Rajesh Taneja, who runs the affiliated Urban Mixer group, said Social Empire also creates a low-pressure space for predominantly single Vancouverites to interact and engage in intelligent conversation.

"It's strictly no dating, no business," he said.

But he added there is a demand for singles events that don't have the pressure or risks associated with the bar scene. "So for dating I created the Urban Mixer group," he said.

The Social Empire currently has about 250 members, he said, with about 300 members involved in Urban Mixer.

Taneja's currently working on a new group called Executive Zone that will concentrate on "non-cheesy business networking."

"It's all about getting people out of their comfort zone, but it's also about learning from people. Every person I meet, I learn from," Hui said.



Frances Hui and Rajesh Taneja organized the first Social Events Showcase, at Crush Champagne Lounge. WARREN FREY/FOR METRO VANCOUVER