

## A Site to be Seen: Frumster's Women Lead the Way

BY NAOMI EHRINS

Carol Leandry complains about being passive. "For a society that seeks women of valor," she says, "it seems hypocritical to want me to feel so helpless." But still she waits by the phone, hoping with all her heart that someone—anyone—will introduce her to her future husband, her soul mate.

That "anyone" may have arrived, albeit in a form that surprises Carol and many other singles. Frumster.com, an Orthodox dating service that boasts 13,000 members worldwide, may contain the remedies to many dating woes. Frumster has been responsible for 117 marriages in a little over two years, and credits its success to its ability to put women in the "driver's seat."

"In traditional circles, women may play second fiddle in the dating system," says Derek Saker, director of marketing at Frumster, "but with Frumster's security and anonymity, women find a comfortable environment to initiate and make decisions."

"Frumster is very empowering," agrees Channie Michanik, who met her husband

Tzvi through Frumster. "No one is judging you."

And indeed, the facts tally up with these statements: Nearly 50% of the marriages that Frumster was the catalyst of were initiated by contact from women.

Frumster seems to be especially helpful to Orthodox women who are a little offbeat, as Kineret Rifkind can attest. "I had horrible, embarrassing dates," she says, "and was continuously set up with the wrong kind of guy." Frumster, to Kineret's relief, was a different story altogether, a route that didn't necessitate "constantly begging *shadchanim* [matchmakers] and answering questions that weren't indicative of who I was." Finally able to make decisions according to her own criteria rather than other people's perceptions of her, Kineret met her husband Yitzchok through the site. She now recommends Frumster to all her friends. "I probably have gotten at least five *frum* people in my hometown of Winnipeg, Canada, signed up there, never mind the many more friends across the United States," she says.



YITZCHOK AND KINERET RIFKIND, A FRUMSTER COUPLE.

Frumster addresses other concerns of women as well, beginning with a screening process that ensures a reputable pool of bachelors and bachelorettes. "We're not Big Brother, we're here to help," says Saker of Frumster's screening process, for which Frumster now charges \$8.95 a month. "But we do vigorously look for anything suspicious." Members are cautioned to employ common sense and caution when meeting in person.

So, do users recommend Frumster? Definitely, says Michanik, adding, "Frumster is what let me be proactive—without that, I probably wouldn't be married today." Frumster, as she sees it, is a tool for promoting Jewish marriages, and thus the Jewish nation.