



## FabFemme :: Get Offline & Meet People!

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Susan Lubeck, founder of FabFemme.

On Myspace, you have 1,000 friends. In non-cyber space, you have trouble meeting other people and your tally of those you count as friends adds up to a wee bit short of 1,000. See the discrepancy?

Many social networking sites provide their members with the opportunity to list people who like some of the same bands and movies- or went to the same college- as friends, and to exchange typo-riddled messages on one another's profiles. Unfortunately, the interaction usually ends there. It's hard to build a real social life, with actual human forms rather than computer representations, and you end up spending Saturday night at home, sending Instant Messages to internet friends you'll probably never meet. Susan Lubeck was keenly aware of this problem when she created FabFemme. She wanted to meet other vibrant and interesting women and help others do the same.

In 2001, Lubeck had just moved to the Bay Area from Chicago. FabFemme, "started as a personal quest to create a thriving social scene in the Bay Area," Lubeck said. Six years, hundreds of events, and many personal bonds later, the concept is still going strong. Lubeck "really wanted to help other women connect," and others seem to share her view.

When asked if she was responding to a perceived void, she said, "absolutely." This lack of opportunities was especially obvious for women in their thirties and above- to meet and interact with other like-minded women. "(The feeling) resonated with me and with other

people at mixers," she said. That resonance inspired Lubeck to put in place a "structure where women can meet through vibrant activities."

"Shared experience creates strong bonds," Lubeck noted about the power of the FabFemme concept. "When people feel they're part of an experience together, connections grow and flourish and that was the ultimate goal."

One of the most unique aspects of FabFemme is that it encourages all of its members to plan and coordinate their own events in their areas, rather than waiting for the people in charge to design the perfect outing for different member's unique tastes. The site aims to empower women and give them the ability to take control of building their social lives.

In 2004, a regional events website serving San Francisco and Los Angeles took off. The newest incarnation of the website is a nationwide site where women can meet and plan events together. Beta launched on April 24, 2007, and a new free membership offering should be out anytime.

Members are now spread throughout the nation and vary in age from 21-55+. Events cover a wide range of activities and have included social mixers, art gallery events, theater outings, wine tours, sailing events, and volunteer activities (including participating in habitat for humanity projects) to name a few. The site differs from

other social networking sites like Friendster and Facebook in the sense that it only facilitates connections between gay and bisexual women. The most significant difference, however, is that FabFemme focuses on taking connections beyond the system of tubes, wires and electrical impulses that is the internet to get people together face to face, without the barrier of a computer screen. It's "the only site on the market today that provides online social networking tools that facilitate fun activities/invitations amongst its members, with customized invitation templates enabling members to create/send invites to other members, one-on-one or in groups."

For instance, two women could meet individually over coffee or a large group could attend a dance class together. The site makes it easy for its members to tailor the events to their ideas of what they want.

The women who participate seem to be getting what they want, according to the glowing testimonials. The members- whose professions range from screenwriting, to contracts administrating, to health and fitness instruction, to psychology- all have wonderful things to say about the site. One woman liked the intimacy of events and found it easier to establish meaningful connections that way. Another admired that many of the events benefit worthy causes, such as breast cancer research and AIDS charities. One woman raved that at each FabFemme event she attended, "the women were by far the hippest, healthiest, most spiritually together women I've ever encountered in Los Angeles."

The women who participate find an opportunity to make connections based on friendship, business and romance. Lubeck said that many women she spoke with felt that online dating sites were only about the virtual connection, while FabFemme is not. Many of the members are mature professionals who are "passionate about what they do." However, Lubeck stressed that "all fabulous women are welcome."

As far as the future goes, Lubeck plans to continue growing the nationwide member base and continue offering, "fab social network features and services." So, next time you're wondering where all the fabulous women have gone and wishing you could turn all your internet friends into real friends, cruise on over to FabFemme.com !

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