

Carroll County Times

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POWERFUL NETWORK

BY JORDAN BARTEL, TIMES STAFF WRITER

Lee Davis and Linda Allen have the type of relationship where they've forgotten just how long they've been friends.

Davis said she thought it was 20 years. Allen countered with closer to 30. They've come to settle on "20-plus."

It's a testament less to failing memory and more to their friendship's staying power. They first met over a cup of coffee. They had no mutual friends.

But both were single parents of boys. They connected in a deep way and watched each other's families grow up. They've both moved around the country and at various times in their friendship have lived anywhere from five to 3,000 miles apart.

But somehow their friendship stayed in tact, and miraculously even got stronger. Now, Davis and Allen want to help other women do the same.

A little more than a month ago, the pair launched [GirlfriendsCafe.com](#), a for-women only social networking site. The premise is simple: The free site allows women of all ages to create profiles (listing their age, occupations, likes, etc.) as a way to form friendships with other women.

The site also allows women to talk in chat rooms, write blogs and post on message boards. Think of it is a non-romantic [Match.com](#) or a more-mature [Facebook.com](#).

Davis, who lives in Utah, collaborates on the site with Allen, who now lives in Florida. The friends first had the idea for the site about six months ago.

"Life had taken us in different directions, but we've always been best friends," Davis said. "There's different stages women go through: Being single, being divorced, seeing other friends get married. If you're a career person, a single mother, and very busy working, it's hard to find time to nurture long-term relationships."

Hence why the pair saw the need for a site like [GirlfriendsCafe](#), which they see as a forum for women of like minds, but also different minds, to come together.

Allen said that while women's horizons expand they can never have too many friends. But, sadly, she's seen that it's far too easy for many women to lose friends over the course of their lives, whether it be through people taking sides during a divorce or simply being too busy with children or work to cultivate lasting relationships with other people.

"I had trouble finding friends when I moved from Ohio to Florida, or when I went from married to single and started living in a strange city," Allen said. "It's difficult to find people who are in the same stage you are in your own life."

Davis said she's already heard positive feedback from the site's members. One member signed up because throughout her life, she'd been unselfishly devoted to her husband and children, rather than finding time for herself or friends. The member's husband and children had been her life.

"But now that member finds herself divorced," Davis said. "Her kids have grown up. Now she's transitioning to this new time in her life. We want [GirlfriendsCafe](#) to make that transition a little easier."

Both Allen and Davis said they have moved to new places or started new jobs and have found friend support systems crumble. Sometimes, that's just the way it goes, they said. But with sites like [GirlfriendsCafe](#), it doesn't have to always be like that, Allen said.

"But it takes patience and realism," she said. "There's no one way to maintain any friendship. It takes some work, but sometimes you need a little help."

Davis and Allen said they want GirlfriendsCafe to simply be a fun place where women can come together and express themselves, to be there for one another. And besides, Davis said, there are some things in life that require a strong female/female friendship.

"Only women can appreciate one another when their hair turns green after they get a really bad hair coloring job," she said.

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On the web:

For more information on the female-centric social networking site GirlfriendsCafe, go to www.girlfriendscafe.com.