

Brides-To-Be Brings Together Everything for a Wedding

Many people fantasize about weddings. Some actually have them. But it's impossible to make a living fantasizing about weddings — or is it?

"Brides-to-Be was a fantasy for me," said Cyd LaChiusa, who owns the leading bridal show company in Michigan. "When I started the business 18 years ago, no one even knew what a bridal show was. Brides-to-Be created the whole business."

Before she started the company, LaChiusa was working in advertising and promotions, which provided a natural lead-in.

Her company produces 25 shows a year all over metropolitan Detroit. Between 60 and 100 wedding-related businesses set up booths and brides are able to browse, compare products and prices. Typically, around 600 people attend each show.

The biggest show of the year is in January in Dearborn, where some 4,000 guests come to see over 250 exhibitors.

She tries to schedule several photographers at each show, from the inexpensive to the extreme high end. Limousines, balloons, cakes, catering, flowers, ice sculptures, and, of course, wedding gowns and tuxedos are all among the products and services represented. Visitors can even find such exotic items as the swans from "Father of the Bride." Each visitor also receives a free "Brides-To-Be" bridal directory.

A big change from the early days is that brides are much more price con-



Cyd with four lovely Brides-To-Be

scious than they used to be.

"Moms and dads used to pay for the wedding," she said. "Now, you see more working women attending the shows and they're very aware of costs, of services, of what the money will buy."

To fill the need, three shows a year are "Super Sales" where everything is discounted.

LaChiusa added a new division three years ago: Babies-To-Be, which holds two shows annually. About 2,000 people come to the shows.

She is also planning to expand geographically into Indiana and Ohio.

The Brides-To-Be office is located at 35000 Moravia, Suite B, and can be reached at (810) 790-5500. The office is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and callers can request lists of upcoming shows and a free bridal directory.

Linda Brown of Northland Center Makes Shopping a Breeze for Moms

With a full schedule at work and a very active nine-year-old daughter, Linda Brown knows first-hand how little time working moms have.

When Brown joined Northland Center as its marketing manager, the working mom used her creative mar-

keting skills to help busy women. She began a "Lunch Breaks" program during the spring and summer months, which provided office employees coupons for various tenants including the Center's food merchants. As part of the package, she included a valet parking card and a map of the Center.

Office employees enjoyed not only the discounts, but used the map to quickly find their favorite stores at Michigan's largest shopping center.

And since moms have so little time around the holidays, Brown worked with the Southfield Downtown Development Authority and began a shuttle pick-up service for the surrounding business community. A huge success last year, the NorthStar Express shuttle program will begin again in November during the lunch periods. The shuttle travels to the surrounding offices, gathers employees

and transports them to Northland Center to complete their holiday shopping. On the shuttle, a greeter provides the passengers with a lunch and map to the Center.

"Our shoppers fell in love with the shuttle service," explained Brown.

"They ate lunch, didn't have to worry about parking, and were able to return to work without being delayed. In fact, this program was such a hit that we are repeating it again this year."

In addition to these time-saving programs, Brown has developed various family-oriented events to provide

Northland's shoppers with entertaining and educational performances for the entire family. For example, the NorthStar Kids Club was created to provide cultural entertainment for children at Northland, where each child receives a free T-shirt and other goodies from the center. The adults were provided with coupon booklets, free valet parking cards, and so on.

"With time at a premium, we've developed programs for our shoppers that are not only good for the Center, but will also make our shoppers' lives easier," concluded Brown.



Linda Brown of Northland Center.

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- Clowns, face-painting, balloon artists
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