

# Couples go back to basics with do-it-yourself weddings

BY TOM TRACEY

Special to the Record-Eagle

When Dawn Steinka and Jason Keeley decided to handle the planning of their upcoming wedding on their own, budget wasn't the only consideration.

"We did not want a super huge wedding," said Steinka.

Local couples are re-defining weddings to fit their own needs and values. While traditional reception halls and wedding planners suit some, others have found a better fit tailoring the details themselves.

"How monetary decisions are handled is one of the biggest factors in predicting

success in the first five years of a marriage," according to Rev. Mary Robling, M.A., a wedding officiate who counsels engaged couples. "Their wedding day is the initiatory moment of the rest of their life."

Two Traverse City area couples gave insights into the planning of their own wedding — one couple recently married, another couple to be wed this summer.

Mandy DePuy, administrative director for the National Cherry Festival, and her husband Mike, a sales representative for Wicksall Distributors, were married Sept. 27. They handled much of the coordina-

tion and planning themselves.

"We wanted to do most of the planning ourselves to try to save as much money as we could to help our parents out," said DePuy.

The couple were married at a church, then held the reception at the Glen Arbor Town Hall.

"It was a lot of fun," she said.

To prepare for the event, DePuy made her own invitations, programs and thank you cards. They based the styles on samples they liked from doing research on the Internet, then obtaining materials from a scrapbook store.

"That saved us a lot of money. I made mine for \$200. If I would have ordered them, it would have cost \$1,300, and the ones we made were just as nice," she said.

Steinka, a customer service representative for Twin City Optical will be married to husband-to-be Keeley, an optician for Dr. Patrick Kiella, on July 31 of this year. (Yes, they met through work).

In preparation for their upcoming July 31 wedding at Timberlee Resort in Traverse City, Steinka obtained professional invitations from a local discount store and printed them on a home computer. The couple also did some of their own floral arranging.

According to Steinka, the biggest help came via the wedding planning Internet site

www.theknot.com.

"It helped me out a lot," said Steinka. "We have a web page on that site."

The site contains links to rings, invitations, table settings, wedding cakes, honeymoons, wedding dresses and bridal accessories. It also includes a wedding checklist and an online form that gives recommendations based on budget, number of guests and attendants.

"Another help was Carol Barr at Fashion Formals. She has a Northern Michigan Wedding Guide booklet that has everything you need to know to get started," she said.

For DePuy, help came from her wedding party.

"I had my bridesmaids help make decorations, invitations and programs three months prior to our date. Everyone has their own vision for their wedding day, but it's always nice to hear other ideas incorporated. Sometimes it adds creativity and individuality," she said.

Both couples relied on caterers to help coordinate and prepare food for the wedding reception.

The challenges of 'doing-it-yourself'?

"One of the hardest things for us was working fulltime and planning when most businesses close at five," said Steinka.

Both Steinka and DePuy

offered advice for would-be wedding planners.

"Shop around and look for the best deal for your budget," said Steinka. "Cut things you really don't need, and have friends and family help as much as they can. Most places are booked solid until 2005 unless you want your wedding on a Sunday or Friday."

"We did a lot of price shopping with caterers, flowers, etc.," said DePuy. "We started talking about plans a year in advance. If you start planning in advance, you'll have time to research and do things yourself to save money."

Sometimes, the payoff for a do-it-yourself-wedding transcends the monetary.

"I had an evening where I made dinner and had all my bridesmaids over and we had a night of dinner and invitation making. It was a memorable night," said DePuy.

"The most important thing I can stress to a bride and groom is to take a moment and take it all in," she said. "Every second, even in the preparations prior to your wedding day, because when the day comes, it goes by too fast."

**Tom Tracey is a local freelance writer.**

## FORMAL AFFAIR



Where it doesn't cost any more to have the very best...

Maggie Sottero  
Authorized Retailer

**15% off**  
Bridesmaids  
Dresses  
through  
February

231-938-6161 • 6170 US-31 N. Acme

**Budget Bridal**

Over 800 gowns in stock!  
up to

**90% off**

Regular Retail  
located in lower level

br1/15 684816

**Bridal Bouquet**



**NOW OPEN**

Serving your wedding  
accessory & flower needs!  
located in lower level

231-938-6161 • 6170 US-31 N. Acme

## TAYLOR RENTAL

**WE BELONG AT THE TOP OF YOUR WEDDING LIST**

That way you'll have the best of everything. And instead of buying, you can rent the tables, chairs, linen, china, crystal, silver serving pieces, even the tent. Everything for your party for rent.



- ♥ Tables, Chairs ♥ China, Crystal
  - ♥ Table Linens ♥ Flatware, Silver
  - ♥ Chair Covers ♥ Chafers
- 1888 East Mitchell Rd.,  
Petoskey, MI 49770-9686  
231-347-1840**

br1/14.733875

**NEW YORK CATERING**  
Up North

20 Years of Experience  
New York Pastry Chef  
Custom Designed Cakes  
Gourmet Deserts  
Exquisite Wedding Cakes  
Hors d'Oeuvres Receptions  
Elegant Special Occasion Cakes  
All cakes made from fresh ingredients, never frozen  
Pastry Chef Bill Warner  
(231) 599-2117  
nycater@torchlake.com  
www.weddingdetails.com/newyorkcakes

1-14.br733746