

# **Charitable Wedding News**

A forum connecting weddings, communities, and philanthropy

- 1) **In Focus** : Location, Location, Location: Socially Conscious Wedding Venues
- 2) **Industry Leader**: Dan Stark, Executive Director of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta
- 3) **Links**: GORP
- 4) **Nonprofit Spotlight** : San Diego Natural History Museum
- 5) **Couple Profile** : Rosemary McNaughton and Gary Felder
- 6) **Recent Press about Charitable Weddings**

---

**Charitable Wedding News** is sponsored by the I Do Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps couples share some of the joy and generosity of their weddings with the charitable organization of their choice. Comments or written contributions can be sent to Eric Colchamiro, editor, at [Eric@IDoFoundation.org](mailto:Eric@IDoFoundation.org), [www.IDoFoundation.org](http://www.IDoFoundation.org)

---

## **1) In Focus: Location, Location, Location: Socially Conscious Wedding Venues**

The location a couple chooses for their nuptials is one of their most important wedding planning decisions, reflecting both their values and personalities. A socially conscious wedding location is one where the site itself is dedicated to public good, and proceeds from weddings go toward maintaining the site. For example, the fee to host a wedding at a nature preserve, botanical garden, museum, or historical society helps to pay for the maintenance of the location and often the educational programs that take place there.

The great news is that choosing a socially conscious wedding location can actually help couples save money. These locations generally cost a lot less than most traditional wedding venues, may require less decorating, and, because they are not the first places couples usually consider for a wedding, are usually easier to book than traditional wedding venues.

### **Artistic Expressions: *Museums and Galleries***

Couples can create a dramatic backdrop for their event and give their guests something to think about when they choose an artistic venue, such as an art museum or gallery. The Art Museum Network (<http://www.amn.org>) has listings of museums around the country,

as well as information about their collections and exhibits for couples who would like to coordinate their wedding theme with museum exhibits.

### **History in the Making: *Historical Sites and Homes***

Hosting a wedding at an historical location helps to both educate guests and, in many cases, to support educational outreach programs for elementary and high school students. The Directory of Historic House Museums lists hundreds of historic houses in every state, some of which have special events planners on staff. Couples can click on the website of the location for information about event planning, or contact the sites directly to speak with an event planner.

([www.preservationdirectory.com/housemuseums\\_main.html](http://www.preservationdirectory.com/housemuseums_main.html))

### **Stop to Smell the Roses: *Parks and Botanical Gardens***

Parks and botanical gardens offer beautiful settings for weddings with little need for more decoration. The National Park Service website, [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov), hosts a directory of local, state, and national parks from which couples can select by natural formation (glaciers, volcanoes, and wildflowers to name a few choices!), activities available, and park type. By typing “weddings” into the search field of the NPS website, couples can also find a range of pre-organized wedding services in different parks. The American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (<http://www.aabga.org/>) also provides a national listing of botanical gardens and arboreta searchable by state.

### **A Community Affair: *Community Centers and Not-for-profit buildings***

Community centers and nonprofit organizations often open their doors to couples looking for a unique wedding venue. For same sex couples, The National Directory of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Community Centers website, [www.lgbtcenters.org/directory.asp](http://www.lgbtcenters.org/directory.asp), provides a listing of community centers in almost every state.

### **Where the Wild Things Are: *Aquariums and Wildlife Preserves***

Couples can take their guests for a walk on the wild side by hosting their wedding and reception at an aquarium or wildlife preserve. The rental fees for ceremony and reception spaces go toward maintaining the animals’ natural habitat, care, and, in some cases, preservation of endangered species. The Directory of World Aquariums (<http://www.mr-to.com/aquarium/world.html>) lists aquariums in the U.S. and abroad.

## **2) Industry Leader: Dan Stark, Executive Director of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta**

The following is a brief interview with Dan Stark, Executive Director of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA). The AABGA, founded in 1940, is the parent organization for North American public gardens and their staff. The organization works to serve and strengthen public gardens by supporting their work, value, and achievements in horticultural display, education, research, and plant

conservation. Dan Stark spoke with Charitable Wedding News about how couples can have a meaningful, scenic wedding experience at a botanical garden or arboreta.

**CWN:** For those who are not entirely familiar with your organization, give our readers an introduction to the AABGA and the resources it offers to its member groups.

**DS:** The AABGA is a 501c3 association that provides benefits and services to people in the public garden industry. We try to act as a resource center to our members, by offering information and organizing regular conferences throughout the United States.

**CWN:** What is the role of botanical gardens and arboreta in our society?

**DS:** The role of our member groups is three-fold: to provide displays of beautiful plants, so that the public can see them; to educate the public about the role of the plants in the greater world; and conservation, as they work to ensure that plant species do not disappear. On the most basic of levels, botanical gardens and arboreta are cultural institutions where people can come and see beautiful plants.

**CWN:** If a couple is looking to have their wedding at a socially conscious wedding location, what would a botanical garden or arboreta have to offer?

**DS:** Botanical gardens and arboreta play an important role in society. They contribute to the conservation of plants, to showcase all plants, and to ensure that plants do not reach the endangered status. They also ensure that people have opportunities for cultural enlightenment. People choose to have their weddings at botanical gardens and arboreta because of the sheer beauty of the location, and because having your wedding there serves to promote and ensure the economic viability of these organizations.

For more information about the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, visit [www.aabga.org](http://www.aabga.org).

### **3) Links: GORP**

GORP ([www.gorp.com](http://www.gorp.com)) has the most extensive online listing of national parks, forests, monuments, nature preserves, wildlife refuges, trails, rivers, lakes, historic sites, and all places outdoors and adventurous. Couples can select from a list of locations in every state, on every continent, and containing a variety of activities.

For more information, please visit [www.gorp.com](http://www.gorp.com).

### **4) Nonprofit Spotlight: San Diego Natural History Museum**

A socially conscious wedding location can be a meaningful experience for both couples and their guests. While botanical gardens and arboreta can help form a gorgeous vista for wedding ceremonies, there are many other locations that can bring a unique socially conscious perspective to a wedding experience.

The San Diego Natural History Museum offers rental locations for wedding receptions, including a recently opened 90,000 square foot “green” addition. Their four-story Grand Atrium is one of San Diego’s great public spaces, providing orientation to all of their internal galleries, the theater, museum store, and their Environmental Science Education Center. Proceeds from wedding events support the Academy, an organization that plays a vital role in the research, education, and exhibition of the natural world, with a special focus on southern California.

For more information on how to reserve the Academy for a wedding, see: <http://www.sdnhm.org/venue/index.html>.

### **5) Couple Profile: Rosemary McNaughton and Gary Felder**

Like many engaged couples, Rosemary McNaughton and Gary Felder of Raleigh, North Carolina, were concerned about how their wedding would impact the environment and their community. With a history of volunteering together at a housing cooperative and science outreach programs, it is not surprising that this community-minded couple also decided to host their wedding in a location that uses Mother Nature as the decorator.

“We got married in a nature park, which has an outdoor chapel and a lodge for the reception,” says Rosemary, a graduate student in astronomy. “Before and after the wedding guests were able to go hiking or canoeing, play volleyball, or simply stroll around the park.”

Rosemary and Gary saw their location choice both as an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and as a reflection of their priorities and values.

Rosemary’s final words of advice for other couples considering a back-to-nature location: “In the end, it’s your day and you should do what you believe in”

### **6) Recent Press about Charitable Weddings**

*Atlanta Jewish Times*. “Altruism at the Altar: Couples Give Away Cake and Eat it Too with Registry that Donates Portion of Gift Proceeds to Charity.” October, 2003.

“Judy Budnitz and Jeff Linnell held their wedding ceremony in a bookstore instead of a temple. They served cupcakes instead of a tiered butter-cream cake. They gave out books instead of conventional party favors. Their wedding was anything but typical, but for the happy couple, it was the perfect way to tie the knot.

The pair was married at the Housing Works Used Book Café in New York, part of a not-for-profit agency that helps homeless people with AIDS. The venue allowed the couple to integrate their charitable lifestyle into their wedding day.”

*Elegant Weddings*. “Weddings With Heart.” Winter, 2003.

“Registering for that waffle iron can mean more than a few hot breakfasts if you do it through the I Do Foundation, a nonprofit group that helps couples make charitable donations part of their wedding. When you create a registry at [www.idofoundation.org](http://www.idofoundation.org) a percentage of the money spent on gifts is donated to a charity of your choice.”

---

### **I Do Foundation**

The I Do Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, whose mission is to bring a charitable focus to special life events. The Foundation helps engaged couples raise charitable wedding donations through three channels:

**Gift Registry:** When couples register with our partners—including Target, Linens 'N Things and Amazon.com—up to 8% of all spending is donated.

**Travel:** The I Do Foundation's partner, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, donates 5% of all honeymoon packages and 4% of guest hotel lodging purchases.

**Donation Registry:** With our flexible Donation Registry, guests can make a donation directly to charity in place of, or in addition to, traditional gifts.

**Favors for Charity:** The Favors for Charity program allows couples to make donations in honor of their guests in place of (or in addition to) traditional favors.

To learn more, visit [www.idofoundation.org](http://www.idofoundation.org) or contact [info@idofoundation.org](mailto:info@idofoundation.org).

To unsubscribe, send a message to [newsletter@idofoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@idofoundation.org) with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

I Do Foundation grants readers permission to distribute this issue in its entirety to colleagues, students, and friends. To receive a free copy of Charitable Wedding News or to change your address, send an e-mail to [newsletter@idofoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@idofoundation.org).

For related services, subscription questions, and technical support, send an e-mail to [info@idofoundation.org](mailto:info@idofoundation.org).

NOTE: If your e-mail system does not support Web linking, or you are having difficulty linking to a news item, you can copy and paste the URL into your browser's location bar to go directly to the specified article.

Copyright (c) 2003 by the I Do Foundation.