

# Charitable Wedding News

A forum connecting weddings, communities, and philanthropy

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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).

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## 1) In Focus: You Are What You Wear - Socially Conscious Wedding Attire

Wedding attire is usually one of the first things on the planning to-do list. With gowns that cost over \$2,000, tuxedos that are out of style within a year, and the infamous bridesmaids dresses left hanging at the back of the closet, many couples are re-thinking their approach to the traditional taffeta confections.

Brides are finding lots of creative ways to fashion a unique look, and their creativity is often rewarded with cost savings. Whether they are buying non-traditional dresses off the rack, altering heirlooms, or scouring the sample sales, brides are finding new ways to find the dress of their dreams. Many brides and grooms are also turning to socially conscious wedding attire options for alternatives that fit their style, and their values.

### Buying Dresses from Socially Conscious Retailers

Brides are both purchasing their wedding gowns from and donating them to dress boutiques that raise money for good causes. **Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation – Nationwide Tour of Gowns** offers over 2,000 donated wedding gowns for sale, with gowns ranging up to \$599, originally valued at \$5,000. In 2004, the tour will be coming to more than ten cities around the country. All proceeds from the wedding gown purchases go toward making wishes come true for breast cancer patients. [www.makingmemories.org](http://www.makingmemories.org).

Brides in the New York area can check out The Bridal Garden for designer and couture gowns. Proceeds from this boutique benefit New York City children.

[www.bridalgarden.org](http://www.bridalgarden.org)

### **Eco-Friendly Options**

To be environmentally friendly both inside and out, many brides are purchasing gowns made from environmentally friendly fabrics and dyes. **Organicweddings.com** offers several styles of gowns made from hemp, silk, and Tencel fabric blends. Organic Weddings also sells organic fabric that brides can order if they wish to work with a local seamstress to create a dress of their own design.

[www.organicweddings.com](http://www.organicweddings.com)

### **The Wedding Party**

Socially conscious brides are guided by the question: Will my bridal party be able to wear their bridesmaid attire again? Dress designers now offer more flexible bridal party options so that every member of the bridal party can find a combination that works. Brides may also want to consider giving their bridal party a color theme or style rather than requiring a specific dress. Attendants can then coordinate with matching accessories, such as natural fabric wraps or silk scarves.

### **After the Wedding**

Whether the dress is purchased first run or gently used, all wedding gowns can be donated to the **I Do Foundation's Dresses for Charity Program**. Ten-percent of the sale price goes to the charity of the couple's choice, and the remaining funds support the I Do Foundation's ongoing work to encourage charitable giving at weddings.

Additionally, all donations are tax-deductible:

<http://www.idofoundation.org/resources/dresses/>

Bridesmaid dresses and groomsmen tuxedos are also being donated to organizations that reuse them as formal wear for low-income high school students. **The Cinderella Project** collects new and almost-new formal dresses and accessories and provides them, free of charge, to Los Angeles high school students who are unable to purchase their own attire for special occasions like prom, graduation, or quinceañeras.

[www.cinderellaproject.org](http://www.cinderellaproject.org)

### **Lingerie With A Cause**

Even the tradition of presenting a bride-to-be with lingerie can support a good cause. October is Breast Cancer Awareness month, and around that time many retailers offer products from which a portion of the proceeds benefit breast cancer treatment and research. For a week in late September, Donna Karan Intimates, Wacoal, and DKNY Underwear all participate in a fundraising effort where \$1 for each bra tried on, and \$2 for each bra purchased, benefited the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation ([www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)).

## **2) Industry Leader: Geraldine Brower, The Bridal Garden**

The following is a brief interview with Geraldine Brower, founder of The Bridal Garden. The Bridal Garden, opened in January 1998, offers couture and top designer gowns at a fraction of their retail price and then donates profits to Sheltering Arms Childrens Service. A New York City-based nonprofit, Sheltering Arms provides children with a variety of services (including daycare, education, foster care, adoption, and health care programs) to help them grow and develop their full potential. The Bridal Garden accepts donations of new and once-worn gowns and then sells them at a discounted price.

**CWN:** For those who are not familiar with your organization, give our readers an introduction to The Bridal Garden.

**GB:** We receive beautiful couture wedding dresses from designers and brides, and then we resell them to new brides at a fraction of the original cost. People who donate their dresses to us get a tax deduction. And while the designers do not necessarily need that deduction, they also get pleasure in giving brides the opportunity to wear their dresses.

**CWN:** Tell us more about how The Bridal Garden works, both from the perspective of dress donors and bridal customers.

**GB:** Dresses, usually samples or overstock, are donated by designers because they want to help out a charity. Brides donate because they want to help others, and get the tax deduction. The Bridal Garden offers a broad selection for our savvy shoppers; we are happy to give people a wedding dress at a lot less of the price than they could afford to buy one for.

**CWN:** In addition to the charitable aspect, what brings brides to your store?

**GB:** We are run just like a for-profit store, but for a lot of people, the motivation is in the charity. The really creative thing about The Bridal Garden is that while department stores can have only certain designers, we have a range of designers at any given time. When people come to The Bridal Garden, to donate or to buy a dress themselves, they are sharing a positive experience and helping others at the same time.

For more information, visit <http://www.bridalgarden.org>

### **3) Links: Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation - Brides Against Breast Cancer**

Purchases from and donations to Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation-Brides Against Cancer help make breast cancer patients' wishes come true. The organization accepts donations of bridal gowns, bridesmaid dresses, veils, slips, shoes, mother's dresses, and flower girl dresses, and all donations are tax-deductible. Making Memories then holds sales around the country; to find a location near you, visit:

<http://www.makingmemories.org/babc.html>.

For more information, visit: <http://www.makingmemories.org> or call (503) 252-3955

#### **4) Nonprofits Spotlight: The Glass Slipper Project**

The Glass Slipper Project collects new and almost-new formal dresses and accessories and provides them, free of charge, to Chicago high school students who are unable to purchase their own prom attire. Dresses are distributed at Glass Slipper "boutiques," where each student receives individual assistance from a volunteer "personal shopper" as she shops for the dress of her dreams. More than 4,000 young women have participated in the program.

For more information, visit: [www.glassslipperproject.org](http://www.glassslipperproject.org). To find a similar program located near you, visit: <http://www.glassslipperproject.org/yostate.htm>

#### **5) Couple Profile: A Post-Wedding Gift**

When Robin Snyder read in *Washingtonian* magazine that groups such as the I Do Foundation accepted wedding dress donations, she jumped at the opportunity to clear out her closet.

"It just did not seem right to save it in the closet and hoard it," Robin said. "Why should I do that, when I can make it available to someone else who can gain pleasure from it?"

Robin and her husband Bruce Louie first met in 2000 as volunteers at the National Zoo. Even before they met, volunteering and charitable giving were an important part of their lives. "Charitable giving is, quite simply, no big deal," Bruce said. "It's something that everyone should make the time to do."

Robin's dress donation to the I Do Foundation will be sold through the Foundation's consignment partner, I Do I Do Wedding Gowns based in Rockville, MD. A portion of the proceeds from the dress sale will go to support Robin's chosen charity, the Human Rights Campaign.

"Whether it is taking a few hours from your Sunday or giving your dress to I Do," Robin said, "it is definitely better to give than to receive."

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

*Newsweek*, April 12, 2004, p. 66 \_\_\_\_

"Get Hitched and Do Good" by Linda Stern

"You're getting married, and you want everybody else to be as happy on your big day as you are. Share the love by turning your whole wedding into a charitable event."

*Yoga Journal*, June 2004, p. 18

"Tying the Knot" by Laura Lane

"This wedding season, forgo the frying pans in favor of gifts that benefit all beings."

*Ladies Home Journal*, July 2004, p. 30  
“A Better Wedding Gift” by Caroline Stanley

“This wedding season, some brides are picking charity over china by encouraging guests to make donations in lieu of buying them more traditional wedding gift, according to the Council on Foundations.”

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## **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 four 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.

**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.

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