

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. www.idofoundation.org

1) Introduction to Charitable Wedding News

Welcome to the first issue of Charitable Wedding News, the first publication of the wedding industry focused on how engaged couples are bringing a charitable focus to their weddings.

While many wedding retailers and service providers are already a part of this trend, others are just beginning to consider how they can incorporate a charitable focus into their work. Nonprofit organizations, media groups, religious organizations – individuals in all of these sectors are helping couples make a positive social impact through their weddings.

This online newsletter has been developed as a forum for people interested in the intersection between weddings, community, and philanthropy. Each bi-monthly issue will include:

- ***In Focus:** A short essay on a new aspect of charitable wedding practices
- ***Industry Leader:** A company or person working within the wedding industry to promote charitable weddings
- ***Links:** Places to learn more about charitable weddings
- ***Nonprofit Spotlight:** A special focus on nonprofit groups couples may want to support
- ***Couple Profile:** Real stories of couples bringing a charitable focus to their weddings

We look forward to sharing our insights with you and welcome you to share yours with us. Feel free to send comments or written contributions to our editor, Lisa Jenkins, at Lisa@idofoundation.org.

2) In Focus: The Growing Tradition of Charitable Weddings

"Weddings are a big business, as anyone who has planned one knows. If we're going to be a part of this industry, we at least want our celebration to include a social mission." I Do Foundation couple, Washington, DC

One of the fastest growing trends for the 2003 bridal season has couples thinking outside of the gift box, literally. Increasingly, engaged couples are looking for ways to bring a social focus to their weddings so that as they share their commitment to each other, they give back to their community.

Couples around the country are incorporating a special social focus into their weddings in ways that reflect their own values and the traditions they plan to establish as a family. Some examples of what couples are already doing:

- *Donating leftover food to food banks
- *Printing invitations on recycled paper
- *Using organically grown flowers in their ceremonies
- *Making a donation in place of favors
- *Incorporating a service project as part of an engagement party or shower

As couples' interest in these wedding alternatives has grown, several organizations have developed to help meet their needs. For example, www.MarriedForGood.com provides a variety of resources for couples looking for charitable wedding alternatives; www.Justgive.org maintains a database of nonprofit organizations for couples to donate to in lieu of wedding favors or gifts.

The I Do Foundation (www.idofoundation.org) is the first organization to allow couples to redirect some of their wedding spending to the charity of their choice. When couples sign up with the I Do Foundation and register with stores such as Target, Linens 'N Things, and Amazon.com, up to 8% of the proceeds from the purchase of gifts are donated to a charity selected by the couple, at no additional cost. Couples can also generate donations by making travel purchases from Carlson Wagonlit Travel, where up to 5% of the cost of honeymoons is donated. The I Do Foundation also provides a direct donation option, where couples can suggest that their guests make online donations in place of or in addition to traditional gifts.

These new wedding options are hitting home for engaged couples. "We are such a consumer-driven society, why not get the things you want and still help others in need?" said Jennifer Urh, a bride-to-be from Massachusetts.

Future issues of Charitable Wedding News will explore this growing trend and more closely examine topics such as eco-weddings, donated favors, and charitable registries. To learn more about planning a socially conscious wedding, visit <http://www.idofoundation.org/resources>.

3) Industry Leader: *Manhattan Bride*

The following is a brief interview with **Rick Bard**, the founding Editor and Publisher of *Manhattan Bride*. Bard's personal commitment to community is reflected on the pages of *Manhattan Bride*, which regularly includes articles and tips on how to create both a socially conscious wedding and a socially conscious relationship.

CWN: How have you observed the wedding industry incorporating a more socially conscious focus?

RB: The biggest change factor, at least here in the New York area, has been 9/11. Since that date, there has been a greater emphasis on family, friends, and the intimacy of the gathering. There also is more of an effort for couples to make their wedding, and all its associated events, more genuine and sincere, as opposed to being swept away by simply trying to have the "biggest, best, grandest" wedding. And in general, since that date, more people are willing to extend a hand to others and to be more giving in their lives and in their charitable efforts. This has extended to the wedding itself, in that brides and grooms are more willing to consider making charitable donations in lieu of gifts and favors.

CWN: How does *Manhattan Bride* embrace the idea of charitably focused weddings?

RB: In our opening "Something Old, Something New" section, almost every issue presents ideas for charitable favors, gifts, etc., that the couple can incorporate into their wedding. But beyond that, we embrace a "charitably focused relationship" for our married couples. Our theme is simple, and revealed in the subtitle that we always run: "Extend your love to others, and watch it grow."

I created *Manhattan Bride* as a magazine about "commitment," but I define that commitment as more extensive than what the bride and groom have for each other. I feel strongly that if the bride and groom create a union that is "charitably focused" -- able to reach out and nurture first each other, and then the widest possible circle of friends and family -- they will strengthen and greatly enrich their own relationship.

To learn more about Rick Bard and *Manhattan Bride*, visit www.manhattanbride.com.

4) Links: Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation – Brides Against Cancer

Making Memories helps brides and bridesmaids donate their dresses in support of the fight against breast cancer. The program has developed a consignment program with bridal shops; through sales of donated gowns, Making Memories raises money to fulfill the dreams of metastatic breast cancer patients.

To learn more about Making Memories Breast Cancer Foundation, visit <http://www.makingmemories.org>

5) Nonprofit Spotlight: The National Center for Family Literacy

The National Center for Family Literacy's mission is to expand the availability of quality family literacy services across the nation, creating educational and economic opportunities for parents and children.

NCFL's vision maintains that all families at the lowest ends of the literacy and economic spectrum have opportunities to improve their education, economic status, and social well being through family literacy programs.

In Their Own Words: "We know that the family is the strongest element in shaping lives. It's where the cycle of learning begins, where parents' attitudes about learning become the educational values of their children. The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) is devoted to helping families overcome educational challenges of poverty through family literacy."

To learn more about the National Center for Family Literacy, visit www.ncfl.org.

6) Couple Profile

Gwen Shaffer and **Chett Farbstein** are a 21st century couple – they met on the first day of the new millennium and have been together since. Now engaged and planning a summer 2003 wedding, the Philadelphia couple is taking a thoroughly modern approach and incorporating a charitable focus into their special day.

To help bring a social focus to their wedding, Gwen and Chett have registered through the I Do Foundation with Linens 'N Things, where a percentage of every dollar spent on their gifts will be donated to charity. In addition to their gift registry, the couple is also suggesting that guests make donations to a local nonprofit agency.

"We know that our family and friends want to buy presents to celebrate our marriage," said Gwen, 31. "If we're still going to get stuff, we want there to be some sort of social benefit to it."

In addition to registering for gifts that will benefit a social cause, Gwen and Chett are also looking at ways to make their wedding more environmentally friendly. Invitations made from recycled paper are already on the to-do list; Gwen is also checking out the possibility of using organic flowers – grown without pesticides.

"Weddings are always a reflection of the couple," Gwen said. "We want our wedding to reflect our values and what is important to us."

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.

To learn more, visit www.idofoundation.org or contact info@idofoundation.org.

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