

West Roxbury Transcript

Turns out, pink and green don't clash

By David Ertischek / Staff Writer

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May 17 will not only give birth to same-sex marriages, but it will also create many never-before-seen businesses. Such as It's About Time, local wedding planners who specialize in gay and lesbian weddings.

Based in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale, Lisette Garcia and Bernadette Smith are priding themselves as the first business geared to organizing that special day for her-and-her or him-and-him.

"Whatever a couple needs," said Smith, of Roslindale. "If they want a tiki bar, then we can help them get a tiki bar."

"If they want a theme like cabaret or tropical, then we can help them with that," said Garcia. "No one's asking for a big pink wedding."

But it's not just tiki bars and cabarets that the ladies can offer from their many service packages named after famous homosexuals.

The Oscar Wilde is more of a day-of-the-wedding service, as the ladies will give assistance during the day such as making sure that transportation is taken care of. Or their clients can step up to the Eleanor Roosevelt, which includes wedding day services, as well as a referring couples to florists or photographers.

Then there is the Alexander the Great package, where the ladies work with the couple to organize their whole wedding. There are also a la carte services.

Timely idea

Smith knew that their business would be needed. Smith came up with the idea for It's About Time about a year ago, and then after knowing Garcia for a while, she asked her to join in the business.

Smith works at a nonprofit organization to eliminate health disparities, while Garcia attends the school of management at Simmons College. But the two friends, who are fine with being labeled lesbians, have worked as event planners separately for a total of 20 years.

"We're friends first, then business partners," said Smith with Garcia agreeing, who gladly would plan weddings for opposite-sex couples as well.

Smith can easily summarize why their business is necessary in this day and age.

"I was at this commitment service in South Carolina, and this DJ kept on making all these inappropriate and horrible comments," said Smith. "He said things like. 'Ooo, look at those two girls kissing.'"

From that experience, combined with her sensibility, Smith knew that her business idea had legs.

"I knew there'd be a demand for our service," said Smith. "Gay couples needed vendors that would be comfortable with gay weddings and being involved with gay weddings. When we're working with vendors, we want to know if they're gay or comfortable with gay people. We want our clients to have the best day ever."

Weed out homophobes

As Garcia and Smith organize for their clients, they will make sure that the waiters will be polite to the same-sex couples, guests and that the photographer will not make any off-color remarks.

A major thing that the duo has been working on is getting rabbis, reverends or justices of the peace who are comfortable with conducting same-sex marriages.

That is one thing that Eve Alpern, of Roslindale, needed for her wedding.

"They found a rabbi for us," said Alpern, who will be marrying her partner of four years in June. "We wanted a Jewish ceremony. But we also needed a rabbi who would accept a same-sex couple and an intra-faith marriage as well."

Alpern said It's About Time helped her and her partner, Brenda Morris, originally from Ireland, with getting "the nitty-gritty off of our plate." Things such as setting up contracts with the caterers, floral designers and working the out-of-town logistics are now not their worries.

"It's great to have support by It's About Time," said Alpern. "It's such a straight market, it's nice to have people help us find our way through it."

Straight allies

One person helping people such as Alpern navigate their ways through same-sex wedding maze is Aleen Saraceno of Revere.

After meeting Garcia and Smith through a mutual friend, Saraceno, who considers herself a straight ally, is now working as a floral designer for Alpern's wedding.

"I have two gay brothers, and growing up I saw them struggle with their sexuality, and I always promised to do something for them if I could."

Saraceno added she hasn't talked with Alpern yet because flowers are usually the last thing that people put money into.

"Not until a couple of weeks before the wedding," said Saraceno. "It's after they figure out what they're feeding everybody, the alcohol and flying people in. Then they say that they have this much money to spend on flowers."

Saraceno not too sure about what a gay wedding will look like, nor does she think that there's a "gay" flower.

Garcia and Smith laugh and agree that there is no gay flower as a symbol of homosexuality.

The ladies added the style of same-sex weddings are to be determined.

"Some people want a traditional wedding, while some want a more alternative wedding," said Garcia. "But some people seem to want more of a traditional ceremony."

But no matter if the ceremony or party are traditional or alternative, there is one thing for sure.

"It's about time we're able to celebrate our weddings," said Garcia. "And our civil rights, and we're going to save couples their time and energy so when they do get married they're free of stress. They should be able to enjoy their day."

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