

Event planners eye gay wedding market

In less than two months, gay couples from Provincetown to Plymouth will walk down the aisle and pop open the champagne to celebrate their new nuptials.

This unprecedented event has more than just gay and lesbian couples cheering: wedding planners across the Bay State are already seeing dollar signs.

"It's a great time to be a wedding planner," said Tricia Coughlin Shaw, owner of Attention To Detail in North Attleboro. "I've been thinking a lot about it and doing market research to see what appeals to them."

This unprecedented event is creating a brand-new, lucrative market for traditional wedding planners, such as Shaw, and it is also sprouting new businesses, many owned by gays and lesbians, specifically aimed at catering to same-sex couples.

Lisette Garcia and friend Bernadette Smith have joined forces to create It's About Time Weddings, a wedding planning business tailored to the gay and lesbian community. According to the Jamaica Plain business owners, it's not their 20 years of event planning



Bernadette Smith (left) and Lisette Garcia own It's About Time Weddings, a wedding planning business based in Jamaica Plain.

experience they're high-lighting, but the fact they themselves are lesbians.

"It's just a matter of offering couples a service that's a little more personal, more unique because we ourselves are gay and know what they are going through," Smith said.

In preparation for the influx of same-sex weddings, Garcia and Smith have been conscientiously interviewing vendors and businesses to ensure they are only partnering with people who are "gay friendly."

According to Smith, some same-sex couples are anxious about planning their weddings because they don't know how reception halls, waiters and waitresses, florists and other businesses

will react to their nuptials.

"I've actually been at a commitment ceremony before where there was a DJ that made a lot of negative comments about the couple. It's something I have seen first-hand and there is no reason that a couple's big day should be ruined by that," Smith said.

According to Smith, their first priority is to guarantee the couple the event is going to be "comfortable" and "memorable of such a historic occasion."

"One of the most important things that specializes us is that, because we are in the community, we probably know what they want. ... and because we will one day get married," Garcia said.

Christina Wallace