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Learn more about this Lenoir City
gem inside. See pg. 9



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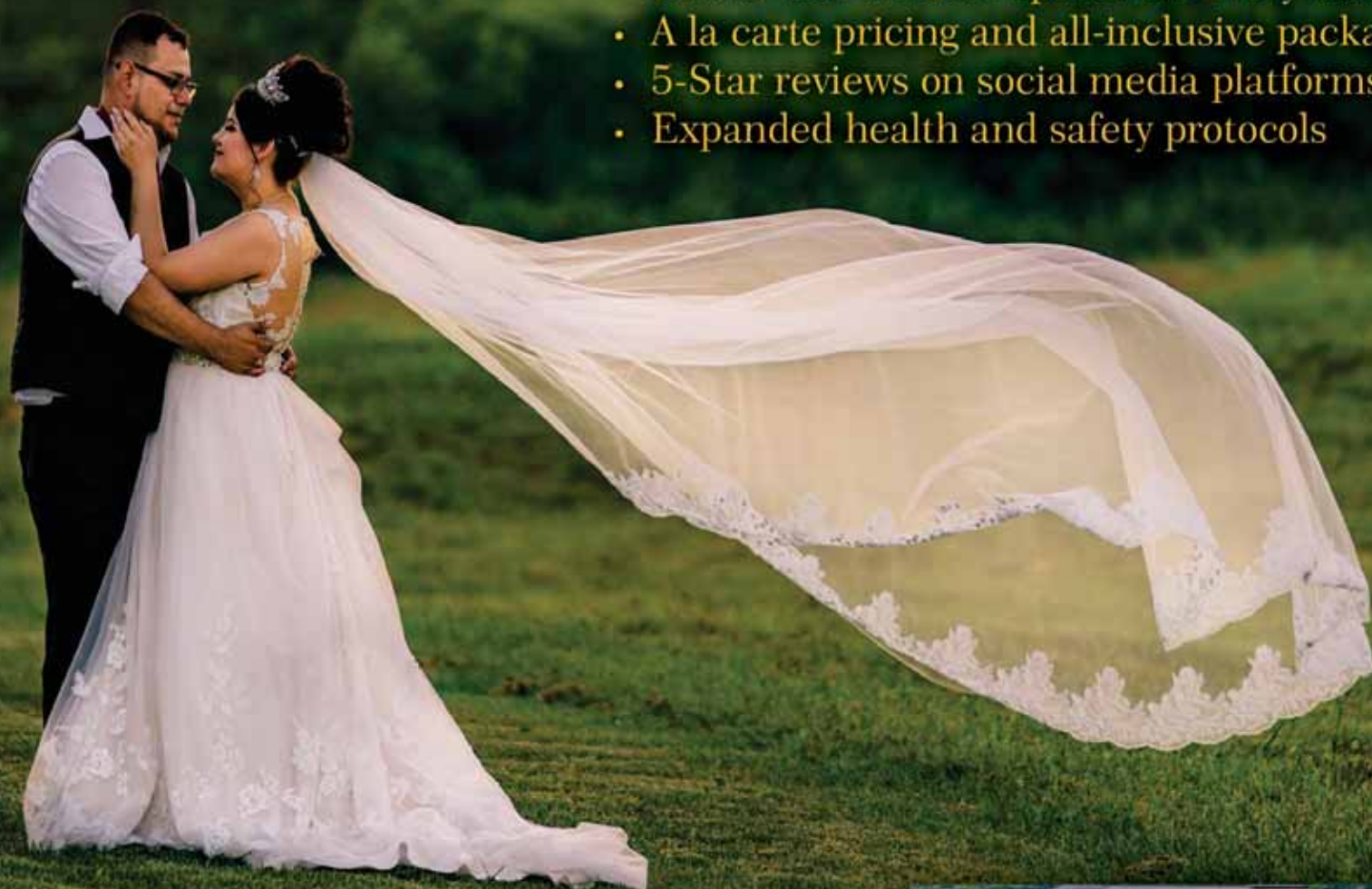
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Bridal Fair

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at-home
weddings

The 7
fairy
tale has a
price

Did you know?

While flowers certainly add beauty and a wonderful aroma to wedding ceremonies and receptions, there are other reasons behind their inclusion in such festivities. In ancient Rome, brides carried or wore flower garlands because the Romans believed flowers signified hope, fertility and new beginnings. In the Middle Ages, brides did not carry flowers, but rather strong-smelling spices and herbs. The rationale was that the herbs and spices would drive away bad luck and evil spirits. Flowers also served another practical purpose. In eras when bathing was a luxury, different flowers and herbs helped mask body odors. It wasn't until the Victorian era, when flowers were used to symbolize romantic love, that they became part of wedding ceremonies, according to Modern Weddings magazine.

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“This will give prospective brides and grooms the chance to completely plan their perfect day,”

~ Stephen Krempasky,
Shop Farragut Executive Director

First-ever Bridal Fair comes to Farragut

In a world of cancellations and postponements, love has been the lone remaining constant during the pandemic.

“People are still getting married,” noted Shop Farragut Executive Director Stephen Krempasky, who — armed with that epiphany and some encouragement from Abuelo’s owner John Volpe — began planning the first-ever Farragut Bridal Fair late last year.

The free to the public event, which will be held 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, April 18, in the gymnasium of Farragut’s Community Center, 239 Jamestowne Blvd., has generated early excitement, and is almost at its 28 vendor limit less than two months out.

Krempasky is very excited about the offering. “Ever since Covid started, I’ve been working on coming up with ideas on how to help our businesses,” he said. “This idea is one that simmered for a while, as Farragut has been getting more and more wedding-related businesses over the last few years. Then John approached me about the idea last year.

“They do catering, and I know of several other businesses that do, too, including Candace [Viox] at Water into Wine, then the ball just

started rolling.”

In addition to Abuelo’s and W2W, participating vendors include: Above the Rest Balloon & Event Designs; All Occasion Party Rental; Amazing Graze; Bellario’s Tuxedo; Choto Medispa; EG Weddings & Events; Farmers Insurance Collins & Wilkerson; Flour Power Knoxville; Hampton Inn; Hawkins Film Co. LLC; International Flair Jewelers; Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union; Lace and Glam Bridal; Longhorn Steakhouse; Mobile Beats DJ Services; Rick Terry Jewelry Design; SouthEast Bank; State Farm Insurance with Laura Ash; Tennessee State Bank; Texas Roadhouse; The Family Table; JCPenney; and The Knox Fox Real Estate Group.

“As of today [Feb. 20], we have three slots left,” Krempasky said. “This is a wonderful opportunity for not only prospective brides and grooms, but also for the businesses offering services they might not be widely known for.”

The event is free to public, and has the distinction as being one of few larger in-person events currently on the horizon for the Town.

“This will give prospective brides and grooms the chance to completely plan their perfect day,” Krempasky said. “They will be able to compare wedding-related products and services, sample the caterers, evaluate gowns, tuxedos and jewelry, and even find the right music.

“Additionally, we will be hosting a fashion show, modeling a wide range of wedding attire, and other businesses will be on site to help couples plan for their futures.

“Most importantly, the Fair will provide the opportunity actually talk to event professionals and ask them those ‘burning questions’ regarding cost and services in-person, instead of by phone or internet.”

Krempasky is cognizant of safety concerns those attending the Fair might have.

“We will wear masks, and socially distance, if still required to do so,” he said. “And only allow so many in at a time, if necessary. We are certainly paying attention to the guidelines, which seem to change day to day.

“The Town has an amazing cleaning system, and they wouldn’t let us do this if they weren’t sure it would be handled safely.”

He sees the Fair as only being able to grow and expand in future years, as the Town also offers its own wedding venues in its parks and at the Community Center itself.

For more information, call 865-307-2486.

~ Michelle Hollenhead
mhollenhead@farragutpress.com

Secrets to at-home weddings

Many couples preparing for their trip down the aisle follow the familiar sentiments expressed by Dorothy in “The Wizard of Oz.” Such couples feel “there’s no place like home” when hosting a wedding ceremony or reception.

There are many benefits to hosting a wedding at home. Homes often hold couples’ most cherished memories, and hosting a backyard celebration or an intimate indoor ceremony at your own home or the abode of a loved one can be a cost-effective way to have a good time.

Here are some tips to help couples navigate hosting an at-home wedding.

Assess the space

The average home is not equipped to handle hundreds of guests, wait staff, caterers, and parked cars. Concessions in regard to comfort and safety will have to be made when drawing up the guest list. The wedding resource The Knot advises the general rule is six- to 10 square-feet of floor space per guest for row seating. You’ll probably need even more space for buffet tables, seating and a dance floor. You will likely need

to temporarily move furniture to comfortably fit everyone indoors — or rent a large enough tent for a backyard wedding.

Hire a cleaning service

It’s important to present a clean, inviting space when hosting a wedding at home. A cleaning service will conduct a thorough cleaning before and after the festivities, freeing up your time for

See AT-HOME on Page 15

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The fairy tale has a price

She smiles as she proceeds rhythmically towards the alter. Everything about her is perfect. Her guests stand, pull out tissues and admire the ceremony.

This one day, meant to be perfect for the lovers, has been months — if not years — in the making. But only one audience member knows just how much time, money and other precious resources have been poured into this day.

Mother-of-the-bride is a time-honored position, accompanied by stress and responsibility. Weddings are expensive events with an overwhelming number of moving parts, which leads one in three mothers-of-the-bride to relinquish their hands-on instinct in favor of a wedding planner. But hired help detracts from the budget, so the frugally minded often plan their daughters' weddings themselves.

In 2019, the average paid for a wedding planner's services was \$1,500.

"People often try to save money by not hiring a wedding planner," said Lindsey Ritter, experienced event coordinator.

Ritter has planned more than 300 weddings since 2015, and her six-person team has systematic ways to keep a wedding on budget. "We keep an Excel sheet with everything purchased for the wedding," Ritter explained. "If you order a package of embossed napkins, it goes in the file."

Wedding planners' vast vendor networks also can mean choices for any client's budget.

Janice Woody, who planned her only daughter's wedding in 2018, found their venue by simply using the Internet. "We visited different venues and came up with what we felt like was the most for our money," Woody said.

She joined 72 percent of Americans in prioritizing the comfort of her guests by insisting on air conditioning for the Southern, late-August wedding, but she was much more hard-pressed to find a venue big enough.

"Six hundred people had been invited," she said. Woody remained unfazed as more than 300 guests RSVP'd. And considering the average number of guests at an American wedding in 2020 was 131, this was a very large wedding. "Through years past we have accumulated a city of

“
The size of
the wedding is
what makes it
expensive,”

~ Lindsey Ritter

Experienced Event Coordinator



See PRICE on Page 11

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Shahid
Akand,
Owner,
Diamond
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Make it Memorable

*Experience, a passion for jewelry,
unbeatable prices, plus a second store.*

Shahid Akand knows how special new beginnings are, and the importance of finding a diamond ring that honors your special occasion. Having opened his second store in Lenoir City in October 2020, Diamond Gallery owner Shahid Akand expresses what a blessing the store has been for him.

Shahid and his family have serviced the Morristown area for more than 15-years and felt that sharing his love in the jewelry businesses would be a great fit for Lenoir City and the surrounding counties. “Jewelry has always been a passion of mine,” he said. “When the opportunity awoke I without a doubt knew jewelry was where I was meant to be.”

Akand, who has decades of experience in the jewelry business, said Diamond Gallery boast an array of diamond styles at unbeatable prices.

Just in time for wedding season, at Diamond Gallery you will discover various brands of exquisite diamonds at a spectacular price. Noting high-end brands such as Pandora, LeVian and Lafonn there is something for everyone. “With the customer in mind, we feel blessed to be able to provide the best prices along with great quality,” Shahid again expresses.

In addition to diamond jewelry, the gallery also carries several popular watch brands, including Bulova, Citizen and G-Shock. Custom design and jewelry and watch repair services are offered as well.

“Whether you’re planning an engagement, celebrating a milestone or just want a signature piece to wear every day, our associates are able to find the

**“At Diamond Gallery,
you will discover
various brands of
exquisite diamonds
at a spectacular
price,”**

~ Shahid Akand
Diamond Gallery, owner

See MAKE IT MEMORABLE on Page 10



Having opened his second store in Lenoir City in October 2020, Diamond Gallery owner Shahid Akand expresses what a blessing the store has been for him.

Make it Memorable

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perfect thing,” Akand explained. “If for some reason we don’t have what you’re looking for, we will make it our mission to find it for you or custom-make it for you.

“When shopping at Diamond Gallery, you can expect to be met with exceptional customer service,” he added. “All our associates are very knowledgeable and can answer any question that may arise about cut, color and quality of what you are looking at or for.”

In fact, Akand said this focus on exceptional customer service is precisely what sets Diamond Gallery apart from other jewelry stores. “Making sure customers

can relax and enjoy their special day is what we do best. Our master jewelers are the finest in their field. They take great pride and care in your repair,” he said. “We invite you to visit our store to see a first-hand look at how we care for you and your jewelry. That way you know your jewelry is in skilled hands and the repair will be performed professionally and ethically.

“We hope to meet each and every one of you soon!” Akand added. “We look forward to sharing our love for jewelry with you and celebrating your new beginnings.”

For more information about Diamond Gallery, call 865-317-1725 or visit diamondgallery.net.

~ Rachel Totten



Shahid Akand (Owner, Diamond Gallery), second from right, is pictured with his family and Aziz Jooma (Alex,) Managing Partner (far left.)

Price

From page 7

friends,” she said, “So there was no one who could be excluded.” Even her daughter’s pediatrician attended.

“The size of the wedding is what makes it expensive,” Ritter explained. “The venue is already the most expensive cost of a wedding, but the catering and whether or not alcohol is served also inflate the price.” Multiply each element the couple elects to incorporate by the number of attendees and your price per head could reach \$500. In 2019, couples spent an average of \$10,500 on the venue alone.

Woody did have the advantage of a volunteer wedding coordinator. A family friend of the groom made a wedding present out of complimentary flowers and coordination of the wedding day. “She did a lot of the leg work,” Woody said with a hint of amused relief.

The coordinator’s position is different from the planner’s: she often only appears for the rehearsal and ceremony, playing no part in the acquisition of vendors.

Day-of coordinators are the most hired, possibly because of the sheer amount of aforementioned “leg work.” But even with the help, Woody offered key advice to mother’s-of-the-bride: “Expect to be very tired,” she warned.

Teresa Darnell, who planned all three of her daughters’ weddings, elected not to hire any wedding-planning help. “I thought I knew enough for the wedding to go OK,” she said. “Maybe a wedding planner would have made a difference, but then I would have had that personality to deal with.”

Darnell also saved money on décor and flowers by doing both herself. For her first two daughters’ weddings, the reception was held in their backyard, which significantly reduced the overall price. “It was so personal,” Darnell said. “You could do it exactly the way you wanted. You didn’t have to go by the venue’s wishes.”

Of course, planning multiple weddings between 1994 and 2003 meant Darnell did not have the technology to find vendors and compare prices from her couch as Woody did in 2018.

But then Ritter said technology is not always budget-friendly. “People see something they want online and decide they have to have it,” she explained. “They don’t pay any attention to the price.” This, then, is another reason to have a wedding planner whose job is to mind your budget.

Very few of Ritter’s clients have savings specifically delegated to a wedding, but the budget could be anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. “Parents are sometimes prepared,” she said, “But usually, if they don’t have the money to pay for it, they put it on a credit card.”



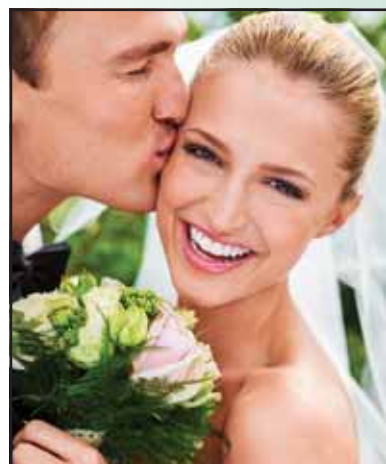
“It is possible to do a reasonable wedding without mortgaging your home. It just takes a little leg work,” Woody assured. “If we hadn’t had the money on hand, I’d have gotten a job, went to work and paid for it ... and you don’t have to give \$10,000 for a dress, believe you me. Get one off the rack.”

The national average price tag on nuptials in 2019 was \$28,000, but keep in mind averages are easily skewed by the outlier who spends \$100,000 or more. A majority of couples adhere to a budget much less than the average.

Whether the mother-of-the-bride hires a wedding planner or fills the role herself, it is possible to plan a satisfying ceremony and keep to a budget.

Take it from Darnell, the mother who single-handedly planned three weddings and receptions: “There’s too much involved to expect it to all go well ... but you don’t have to go into debt to do what’s necessary.”

~ Riley Woody



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The Evolution of Wedding Favors



Wedding favors have changed — and in many cases for the better. Favors have evolved from the inexpensive trinkets purchased in bulk into more personalized mementos that guests can cherish.

Today's couples are interested in customizing their weddings and offering guests something meaningful, or at the very least, edible, so that favors don't immediately get relegated to the trash can. According to Heather Jones of Wente Vineyards in California, favors have moved from "goodie bags" toward items that are experimental and fun. Wedding planners from across the country offer these wedding favor trends that couples may want to incorporate into their own celebrations.

Welcome bags

Rather than take-home bags, welcome bags have replaced the traditional favor trinket at some weddings. Many weddings have become multi-day events that ask guests traveling from out of town to attend a wedding weekend. To help greet them and make their experience memorable, couples may fill a gift bag with items guests can use or enjoy during their stay — like a bottle of locally sourced maple syrup or some handmade soaps from a nearby shopkeeper.

Experience gifts

Instead of a candle or a monogrammed cake server, think of experiences to offer guests. A coupon for free drinks at a nearby brewery, a tour of a local attraction while guests are in town or a group excursion for guests attending a destination wedding can be fun and will help guests create lasting memories.

Charitable donations

Some couples feel that favors are wasteful and would rather set aside a portion of their wedding budgets toward giving back. In such situations, a donation to charity in guests' names can be the way to go. Guests can vote on two favorite charities advertised on a special table at the wedding reception. The one with the most votes will get the proceeds.

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For more information or to participate go to www.farragutbusiness.com/bridalfair2021

Keeping wedding guests informed

Save-the-date announcements

Save-the-date announcements have become an increasingly popular component of wedding planning. Instead of waiting on the wedding invitation, which traditionally arrives one or two months prior to the wedding itself, save-the-date cards provide guests with an advanced advertisement of the celebration to come. According to the photo and invitation specialists at Shutterfly, it's customary to send save-the-date notes around six months before the wedding. For a destination wedding, which will require extra travel plans, an eight- to 12-month advance can be helpful.

Save-the-date cards generally have basic information, including the wedding date and the venue. Many

will feature a photo of the couple as well. If you're planning on sending save-the-date announcements, coordinate with your photographer to have a photo taken exclusively for these cards.

Wedding website

Couples are increasingly embracing technology as they plan their weddings. Brides magazine states that, during the typical 15-month engagement period, 48 percent of couples will launch a wedding website. A wedding website is a versatile tool that can help answer questions that guests may have. The website can spell out specifics, including dress code, whether children are invited, the names of wedding party participants, overnight accommoda-



tions, transportation providers, and even restaurants near the hotel for a quick bite between ceremony and reception.

Wedding websites also can be used as fun ways to keep guests engaged. "Throwback Thursday" photos or funny memories and anecdotes can be included.

Video conferencing apps

As the world continues to adapt in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic,

video conferencing applications like Facetime, Zoom and Microsoft Teams enable people involved in the planning process to routinely "gather" and go over details about the wedding, helping to limit in-person meetings as much as possible. These apps also can prove invaluable when conferring with wedding vendors, such as florists or musicians.

You also can schedule smaller meetings with specific guests who may be playing key roles.

Preparing for your big day?

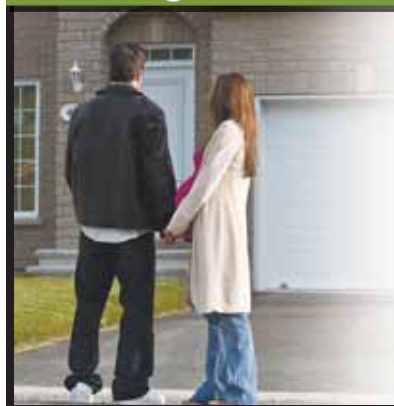
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Favors

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Late-night snacks

After a night of celebrating, some guests may want the festivities to continue, but may need some extra sustenance to make it through a few more hours. Some couples are eschewing traditional favors in lieu of making room for extra food or beverage expenses that can include

At-Home

From page 6

last-minute tasks or to embark on your honeymoon.

Book an officiant early

Confirm with an officiant that they can oversee the wedding proceedings at your home. Many religious officials are not able to perform ceremonies outside of a place of worship.

Learn if it's legal

Certain municipalities may require permits for parking on street, noise past a certain hour, closing of streets, and much more. Do your research. You may need to coordinate

after-party treats. These may run the gamut from wood-fired pizzas to food truck vendors to extra desserts. A tasty take-home option also may be given, such as fresh zeppolis or beignets, or even a personalized bottle of wine. Even if the food and drink is not consumed right away, there's a good chance it will hit the spot when guests return to their hotel rooms

parking at a nearby lot (like a school closed on the weekend) and shuttle people to your home.

Consult with an insurance carrier

Inquire if having such a large party at home is covered by your homeowner's insurance policy, particularly if your home is damaged or someone gets injured during the festivities. Supplemental liability insurance or an umbrella policy may offer greater protection.

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