



THE TWO RIVER TIMES
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Sean and Kaitlin McCarthy took dance lessons before their wedding last year. It helped them to feel more comfortable during their first dance as Mr. and Mrs. PHOTO COURTESY MCKAY IMAGING

Save the First Dance

BY JENNA O'DONNELL

Much like marriage, partner dancing takes patience, practice and some dedicated effort from both parties. That's why many couples, when preparing for their first dance as husband and wife, look for a little guidance on how to put their best foot forward.

Before stepping on the dance floor at the wedding last September, Sean and Kaitlin McCarthy took dance lessons at Fred Astaire Dance Studio in Tinton Falls. The lessons, a gift from Sean's mother, helped the couple feel comfortable in their first dance together.

"It really helped to take some of the stress out of it," said Kaitlyn. "I think it helped us to be in the moment and just enjoy that time together."

Local dance school franchises such as Fred Astaire Dance Studio and Arthur Murray Dance Center in Red Bank offer specific programs to help couples learn to dance together on their wedding day, while others like Red Bank Tango specialize in teaching couples a specific dance: the Argentine Tango. Fred Astaire offers customized dance programs for couples that include a wedding consultation for those who start lessons six months or longer before their date. Arthur Murray offers customized programs that mix private, group lessons and practice sessions. At Red Bank Tango, students learn from expert dancers during Monday night group or private sessions and are also invited to monthly "milongas" with live music and demonstrations by professional tango dancers.

While the Fred Astaire and Arthur Murray schools will choreograph dances specifically tailored to the couple's choice of wedding song, dance instructors say that most people aren't looking to become YouTube stars.

"Usually couples want to do something simple," said Rytis Koreiva, co-owner of Arthur Murray Dance Center on Broad Street. "Nothing too crazy for the first dance."

Highly choreographed and customized dances have become more requested as the popularity of shows like "Dancing with the Stars" has couples looking to inject their own personality into their reception entrance or first dance. Erin Marie, owner of Fred Astaire Dance Studio, has helped couples design personalized dances involving everything from the "Rocky" theme for a mixed martial arts studio owner to a couple who wanted to transition from their slow dance to Justin Timberlake's "Sexyback." But while she's game to help with whatever a couple requests, Erin Marie said most prefer to stick to basics.

"Not everyone wants choreography," she said. "More people just want to be able to dance together and learn a new skill together."

The most romantic – and popular – partner dance styles for engaged couples are the rumba and the waltz, per instructors. The fluid movement involved in tango makes for a unique, if challenging, wedding dance. But most couples seeking a versatile and easily mastered dance opt for the rumba, a slower box-step style popularized in the 1930s.

Learning the dance steps takes time and practice, said Koreiva, who recommends that couples give themselves at least six months to learn. Once people know the steps and how to connect the various dance steps and styles, they can dance the night away to anything.

"Dancing is muscle memory," he said. "The goal is not to think about what you're doing. You start not having to think about dancing and just enjoy being together."

At Red Bank Tango, founder and managing member Joyce Diamond, said couples of all ages, sizes and skill levels are welcome during Monday night workshops. The distinctive dance, said Diamond, is always a showstopper. One couple at Red Bank Tango came to learn the dance as a surprise for their children at a family wedding.

"People are mesmerized by the dance," Diamond said. "There's an elegance to it. It's really a connection between two people."

For every type of dance, time and practice are the key to success. Six months or a year of lessons are encouraged so couples can take the time to learn to dance before they concentrate specifically on their wedding.

At Fred Astaire, most engaged couples sign up for an introductory program that includes two 30-minute sessions that teach the basics of all the partner dances.

"I like to think of that introductory program as the sampler," Erin Marie said, "Like a caterer, you're trying them out. From there, we have a variety of programs."

Instructors are happy to work with couples to make sure their wedding dance is perfect, but encourage them to think beyond that first spin around the dance floor. "It's a lot of time and effort to spend on something you're never going to do again," Erin Marie said. "We always try to say that this is a new skill that you can share for the rest of your lives."

Ultimately, learning to dance is often healthy for couples. Whether learning the fundamentals of ballroom dancing or the intricate steps of Argentine tango, couples get a chance to exercise, hold one another close and work as a team.

"It's good for mind, body and spirit," said Diamond, of tango dancing. "It's also a good social outlet and beautiful music."

Koreiva has personally seen the way dancing can benefit relationships during lessons, even when one partner might start out reluctant to learn.

"It's good for them," he said. "For date night, it's something different to do together."

That has proven true for the McCarthys, who, after successfully dancing to "This Magic Moment" in front of all their friends and family last year, are planning to return for more lessons in the spring.

"We really enjoyed it because it was something new to do together," said Kaitlyn. "It was something to work on together as a team. The whole experience was great – and a lot of fun."

Planning The Big Day

Do-It-Yourself or Hire Help

BY JUDY O’GORMAN ALVAREZ



Maura Boyan and Chris Draper planned their upcoming March 25 wedding.



Jennianne Black asked her mother-in-law Paula to help coordinate her 2015 wedding.

Planning a wedding can be stressful. Whether you opt for a wedding planner, entrust a family member or take on the task yourself, there will be a lot of researching, scheduling and decision-making to be done before you say “I do.”

“Brides and grooms want different things,” said Mike Hernandez, founder of The Wedding Establishment in Red Bank, which offers almost everything – including entertainment, photography, stationery, décor and more – to create that special wedding.

According to Hernandez, an average New Jersey wed-

ding costs about \$53,000, and contrary to what many believe, he said a service like his could actually save money for a couple.

“I can play with their overall numbers,” he said, and help couples allocate their money to the areas that are more important to them, such as photography or flowers.

Every couple chooses what’s important to them, but Hernandez believes entertainment is key. “If you don’t have quality music, it snowballs,” he said. “Some may say the food wasn’t great, but the entertainment made it worth it. If no one is in the mood, they’re not dancing.” And that may show up in the photos. “It’s all reflected in the music.”

Hernandez, who grew up in the business, said that since his own 2015 marriage he now relates to engaged couples even more. “I have empathy for them. I let clients know, I get it, all the stress and craziness involved,” he said. The advice he most often offers: “Just enjoy the day.”

Virginia Tesi knows how to organize. The designer, with offices in New York City and Sea Bright, said perhaps the biggest benefit to working with a wedding planner is they have worked with an array of wedding suppliers. “Whether it’s home design or wedding design,” she said, “I already have a working relationship with vendors.”

And like Hernandez, Tesi is cognizant of the costs. “If you have a budget, we know how to stay within that budget,” she said.

In life, one of the most stressful experiences a person has is getting married. “We take all that stress away from you.”

A wedding planner can also help with wedding etiquette.

Sticking points where Tesi can help may be in the wording for wedding invitations. “That’s one of the hardest things to do because of extended families,” she said. “That kind of conversation could take four weeks! But you don’t have to worry about it – I already know it.”

Perhaps the best perk of all to hiring a wedding planner is having a “scapegoat.” “If somebody yells at you, you can say ‘I did it cause the wedding planner told me,’” she said.

If couples prefer to plan their celebration themselves, they could hire a wedding coordinator for the big day, which Tesi, does as well. “I can make sure all the people



Keri and Gregory Nelson hired a wedding planner for their July 2016 wedding.

are in the right places,” she said.

When Keri and Gregory Nelson married in July, they were delighted by Tesi’s advice and planning. “I would say the benefits of working with a wedding planner really came down to the small details that I wouldn’t have thought of without Virginia’s help,” said Nelson, who is from Rumson and now lives in Virginia. “Also, she took care of the larger pieces of the planning process – flowers, working with the venue and band – which would otherwise have been rather stressful.”

And sometimes your wedding planner could be right in your family.

Paula Black’s years of running and coordinating PTA and charity fundraisers prepared her for the monumental tasks of planning both her son’s and her daughter’s weddings in 2015 and 2016. “I’m a control freak,” said Black of Colts Neck, “and I’ve been a planner forever.”

Black said she enjoyed visiting venues, researching vendors and couldn’t imagine passing on that type of task to an outsider.

Embracing the researching and groundwork, Black passed along her details and suggestions to the couples. “I kind of just guided them,” she said, and kept track of the schedules. For example, when her daughter Liz chose her wedding dress, Black ensured her fittings were scheduled and adhered to. “I made sure she was on task, and not leave everything to the last minute.”

Jennianne Black, Paula’s daughter-in-law, was especially thankful for her mother-in-law’s help, whom she calls “an unofficial wedding planner.”

“Between her organization and referrals... everything flowed and nothing was overlooked,” said Jennianne, who’s own family lived out of state while the wedding was held in New Jersey.

“We chose the majority of our vendors based on referrals from family and friends,” said Jennianne, who along with her husband Billy attended seven weddings last year and have

another four to go to this year. “We definitely imparted a lot of knowledge and experiences we had in planning our wedding to our friends who are getting married.”

Maura Boyan of Neptune City and fiancé Chris Draper have planned each detail of their upcoming wedding March 25 on their own. “You really make your wedding your own – it’s yours and your husband’s vision,” she said. “That being said, there are a lot of details involved and I could understand why people use a wedding planner.”

Boyan did most of the research herself. “It’s confusing when you first start,” she said. “There’s so much information out there, and it runs the gamut of pricing,” Boyan said.

“And,” she points out, “most people have never done this before.”

Boyan said her mother and sister were a big help in researching and planning, and she received recommendations from friends. Posting a note on her Facebook page wielded helpful suggestions and the name of the photographer she booked. “I was looking for like-minded vendors who would understand the vibe of our wedding – small with an intimate feel.”

One of the important lessons Boyan feels she learned while planning their wedding was negotiation. “I can see how people get easily roped into paying high prices,” she said, “but people can decide what’s most important and what they’d rather spend more money on.” Most vendors, she found, will work with you. “It doesn’t hurt to ask.”

For example, Boyan said she could justify spending more than they intended on photography because the photographer they found was the right fit. “We wanted to find a photographer that would capture us and the day and the feel, and we were willing to splurge on that.”

So whether you plan your wedding from soup to nuts yourself, assign a loved one to the task or hire a professional, you can make the most of your wedding day.



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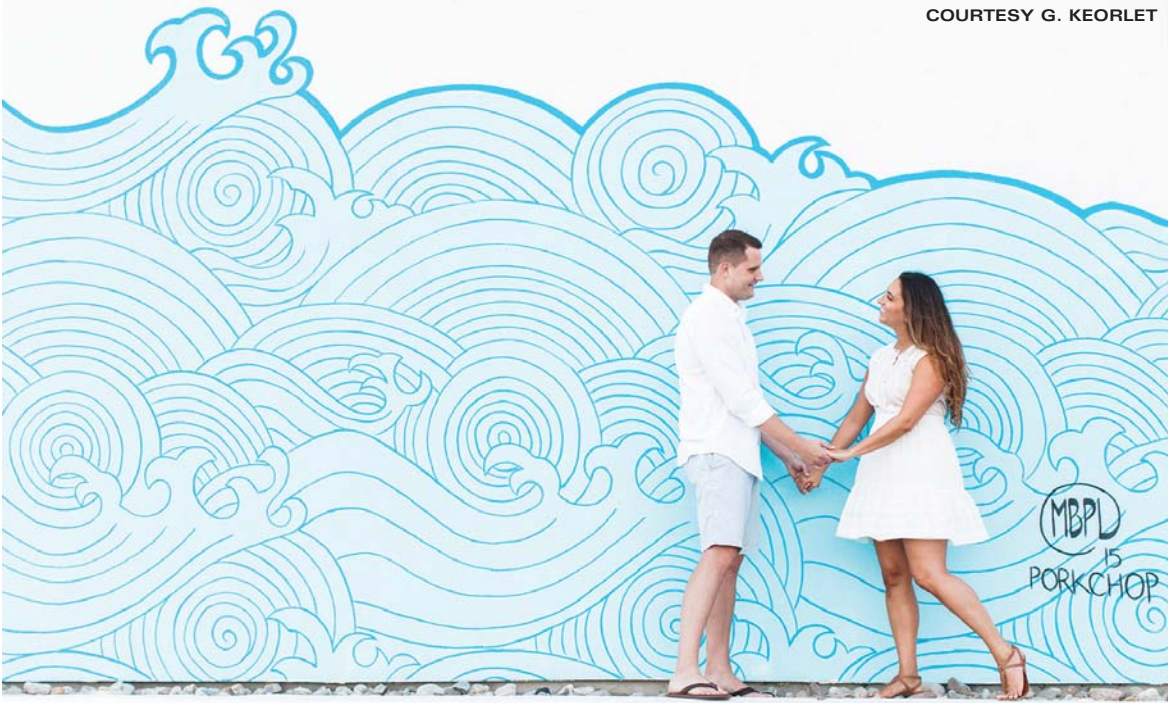
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Gina Keorlet, pictured above with husband Bryan before their wedding, worked with trainers at Pure Barre in Red Bank to get toned and fit, see photo right, for their October 2016 wedding.

BY CASSIE GALASETTI

We all know that to get strong, feel good and look your best you need to eat healthy and have a consistent workout program, but when it comes to reaching your goals for a specific deadline as your wedding, you may need to adjust your normal routine.

Nearly 90 percent of the newly engaged are planning to amp up their fitness routine to look their absolute best during their big day. With all the pre-wedding to-dos, sometimes it's tough to stick to a workout regimen long enough to get the results you really want to attain.

"I knew that I wanted something different to get in shape for my wedding," said Nichelle Sage of Holmdel, who married last October, "but with so many gyms and programs it was hard to know what would truly work for me. I have always been a gym-goer but nothing seemed to get me the results that I wanted."

Sage turned to the team at Perspirology in Sea Bright to train her body "in order to get the results that I always tried for, but could never achieve. This program is challenging, fun, and when it comes to 'sweating for the wedding' there's no better workout. I was able to walk down the aisle more confident than ever."

And she did, after losing a whopping 31.35 inches and 14.2 pounds. Fitness experts like Katy Fraggos, owner and head trainer of Perspirology, a boutique fitness studio that specializes in sculpting tight, toned physiques through dance-based exercises, has worked with many brides and A-list celebrities over the years. Whether her clients are walking down the red carpet or walking down the aisle, Fraggos suggests starting early. "The more time you give yourself, the more you can make it a gradual process for more lasting results," she said. "I believe in making small lifestyle changes that make a huge impact in the long run. The minimum amount of time I would suggest is three months. I think 10 months to one year is optimal in achieving the results you really want."

Fraggos recommends five to six days a week with one rest day and regular check-ins to help you track progress. "Often times, small adjustments in calorie intake, cardio amounts, or training days will need to be made to prevent plateaus. Also, if you check in monthly, there is always something to hold you accountable for your actions."

Pure Barre is another studio that offers a total body workout with classes that utilize a ballet barre to perform small, isometric movements, that in turn burn fat, sculpt muscles and create a long, lean physique.

Melanie Colman, co-owner of Pure Barre Red Bank sees a great number of brides coming through the doors of her studio on Broad Street. "We have seen a shift in wedding season, as it is no longer certain months but continual through the year," she said. "Each bride brings

Sweating for the Wedding

Fitness Tips For The Newly Engaged



energy and excitement to the studio, as we get to partake in their journey and watch the transformations."

While every bride is different and hopes to achieve her own unique goal, it's important to find a gym that caters to every need. "As you get stronger you find ways to deepen the work so your body never hits a plateau," said Gina Keorlet who credits her work at Pure Barre for helping her to get toned and fit for her wedding five months ago. "Getting fit for my wedding was really important to me and I could not be happier with the results," she said. "I've lost inches on every part of my body, down two sizes, and feel stronger than ever."

Free Will Fitness in Colts Neck is also frequented by the newly engaged. "The biggest thing most brides look to achieve is weight loss," said co-owner Kyleigh Roth. "Looking lean and photo-ready is very important to most. Ironically though, most brides put a ton of focus on having toned arms. This is just funny because most females like to focus on their thighs and glutes and this tends to change for wedding prep because the dress covers those areas and usually exposes the shoulders, arms and back."

Roth and co-owner Andrea Meleleo said they find wedding prep motivates non-active men to make some changes as well. "Seeing their bride-to-be work hard to look great on that big day seems to rub off and push them to want to do the same," said Meleleo. "They tend to want to focus on getting leaner as well as a more toned, muscular physique to fill out that tux."

Besides starting early and continuing with a consistent workout routine, trainers and brides agree, it's important to track your food intake. There are numerous apps that can track everything you eat, to how many steps you take each day. If you're less tech savvy, you can always keep a journal by your nightstand to record your intake.

You should also treat your workouts like an appointment with yourself. You wouldn't miss your dress fitting or cake tasting, would you? Your workouts should be considered just as important. Make sure to steer clear of fad dieting and fitness gimmicks. It's easy to fall into these too good to be true traps, especially with weight loss methods taking over your social media feeds. These methods will only hold you back from your goals in the long run.

Once you get in to the rhythm of a good workout routine and incorporate the right foods into your body, you will create a recipe for success and have yourself looking your absolute best on the big day.



COURTESY MCKAY IMAGING

Katy Fraggos of Perspirology in Sea Bright counts brides-to-be among her clients looking to slim down and tone up for their walk down the aisle.

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“The only thing we overlook is the waterfront”

New That You're Engaged...

Wedding expert and creator of HookedWeddings.com, Denny Testa, shares his 10 top tips on what to do when you first get engaged.

1 Hit the Books.

Opinions and suggestions will be tossed at you from every direction. While Aunt Eleanor's wedding might have been lovely, times have changed a bit. We recommend utilizing all the modern day "wedding planning" resources. Google websites and reviews, read magazines, ask trusted friends about their experiences.

2 Make Whoopee.

Relax, have fun, enjoy the ride, and celebrate. Remember being engaged is all about fun and celebrating your future marriage. A wedding is not a competition and you are free to plan any type of wedding you would like. You can make it nutty like a fruitcake or as simple as pie. It's all up to *you*.

3 Circle of Trust.

Guest lists are super important. Do you *really* need to invite everyone you have come into contact with, or do you just want to celebrate with the people you actually like? There is a huge difference between a 100-person guest list and a 300-person guest list. Figuring out the amount of people you will want to host will help greatly with our next tip.

4 Louboutins Or Crocs?

Loosely set your budget. Are you willing to break the bank for a luxury wedding? Or do you want to spend on something that is a hair more reasonable? If you have your heart set on certain things for your wedding you will want to explore their actual costs before choosing a budget. Be extremely wary of "average costs" that you find on national websites. These can be misleading. So if you initially set your budget only based on these seemingly random statistics, you may find yourself eating only ramen noodles for the remainder of your engagement just to have your dream vendors.

5 Adult Nanny.

Hire a wedding planner. Just like a nanny they will be there to monitor your every move and keep your planning on track. While wedding planners are an investment, a planner can actually save you money, time, and your sanity.

6 Hipster Or Yuppie?

Think about your personal style and where you imagine your wedding. Do you envision it in an elegant ballroom, an old factory or a loft? A golf course, yacht club or a rustic barn? Or perhaps you see yourself celebrating at your own home or spending a weekend glamping with your friends? Decide what season are you hoping for and what you want the overall theme to be. Remember whatever you choose, be yourself. It is your wedding after all!

7

Capture Your Flag.

Find the perfect venue and claim a date as your own. We are sure you are wondering why this is not No. 1. Simply stated, you don't want to jump the gun and make this *huge* decision without having an idea of all the elements we listed above. If you have done your research, you will be confident that your flag is in solid ground.

8

Radio Silence.

Take a deep breath – or seven. Go out and have some fun. Enjoy this romantic time in your life. Go out and be silly. Try something new together like dancing lessons.

9

Grab your Crew.

Start interviewing and hiring your professionals. You will need to hire the entertainment, a photographer and videographer right away. These vendors book out faster than others so start that early, we suggest at least 12 months prior.

10

Spare Tire.

If you want to look like you stepped out of the pages of Vogue or GQ on your wedding day make sure you start your fitness plan shortly after setting your date. Set realistic goals and remember that it takes time to melt back fat, get in shape or tone up.

Denny Testa, owner of offBEET Productions, is the creator of the web series "Hooked Weddings," where he combines his expertise on weddings, with his passion for making life simple, easy and fun.



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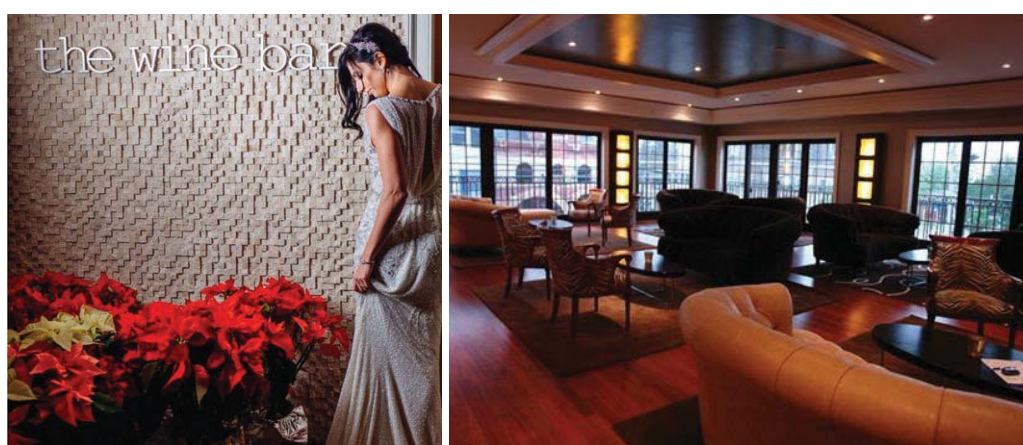


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TAYLOR BROWN AND AMANDA McKEAN

Amanda McKean and Taylor Brown

Amanda Agassiz McKean and Taylor Lansing Brown are to be married on March 25 by the groom’s father, Pastor Stephen Brown, at the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club in Naples, Florida.

Ms. McKean, 26, is a senior account executive at Momentum Worldwide in New York City. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Fairfield University, with a major in communication and a double minor in English and marketing. She is also founder and president of the CancerCrusher Foundation.

She is the daughter of Quincy Adams Shaw McKean III and Lisa McKean of Rumson. Amanda’s father is a senior vice president of Investments at Buckman, Buckman & Reid in Little Silver. Her mother is managing director of Marketing & Development at Monmouth Conservation Foundation in Middletown.

Mr. Brown, also 26, works in Investor Relations & Marketing at Brevan Howard US, LLC in New York City. He graduated with a B.S. in Economics from the Wharton School of Business - University of Pennsylvania, where he also played football.

He is a son of Stephen Brown and Barbara Brown of Red Bank. His mother is a teacher at the Monmouth Beach School in Monmouth Beach. His father is the pastor at The First Baptist Church of Red Bank.

Walk Off the Stress of Wedding Planning

*Red Bank is Bringing a Honeymoon Phase
to Wedding Planning this month with the
Return of its Annual Wedding Walk*

RED BANK – Red Bank RiverCenter’s annual Wedding Walk is slated to take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 26. Free and open to the public, the Red Bank Wedding Walk provides participants with the opportunity to interact with more than 40 vendors, via a charming trolley ride or on foot, who are ready to address all wedding necessities from stationery invites to elaborate amenities.

Guests can check in from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Oyster Point Hotel, 146 Bodman Place, and go on for the self-guided tour in Red Bank. A grand prize drawing will be held at 3 p.m. at Molly Pitcher Inn, 88 Riverside Drive.

For more information and to register, Attendees are asked to register in advance at red-bankweddingwalk.com, where they can also browse the participating businesses and map out their itinerary in advance to get the most out of their day.

The Wedding Walk will commence at 10 a.m. where attendees will check in and enjoy continental breakfast at the Oyster Point Hotel at 146 Bodman Place. From there, with Wedding Walk map/passport and tote in hand, participants will set off on a self-guided tour to explore rehearsal dinner and award-winning wedding venues, photography and videography professionals, entertainment and transportation experts, hair and makeup salons, and of course dress boutiques offering options for the bride, bridal party and mom with a beautiful selection and more.

Attendees will conclude the event at 3 p.m. on the promenade of the historic Molly Pitcher Inn with an elegant reception featuring music, savory treats, libations and a champagne toast. During the closing reception, winners of the grand prizes, as well as a wide array of door prizes, will be announced. Prizes include an all-inclusive honeymoon trip to Punta Cana, a romantic getaway package at the Molly Pitcher/Oyster Point, a full DJ entertainment package including lighting and a photo booth, and many more wonderful prizes. To be eligible for the grand prize drawing at the end of the day, guests must visit at least 12 businesses during the Wedding Walk.



Registration Location:
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
The Oyster Point Hotel
146 Bodman Place

Wedding Walk Location:
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10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Wedding Walk ends at 4 p.m.



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