

Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide

CHM declares 'One Love' with wedding expo

BY GRETCHEN RACHEL BLICKENSERFER

On the evening of April 10, visitors to the Chicago History Museum's One Love event became wedding crashers at a spectacular reception as the ornate Chicago Room was transformed into a cocktail party replete with elegant place settings glistening with an array of styles and colors under a grand chandelier.

Delectable hors d'oeuvres representing some of the most inventive and sublime selections from caterers across the city including Berg-hoff Catering and Restaurant Group, Food for Thought and Jewell Events Catering were complimented by strawberry champagne, a beer tasting station, a vodka cocktail from Halsted Vodka and sparkling wine from Biagio Cru & Estate Wines—both companies that pledge to donate a percentage of their profits back to the LGBTQ community. Guests could then feast upon an array of luscious chocolate truffles from Katherine Anne Confections, velvety donuts from Glazed and Infused, or cakes crafted in elaborate detail from Amy Beck Cake Design.

Also on hand were wedding planners, make-up and hair experts, wedding designers and entertainment providers—all of whom were there

to offer services in a safe environment and to let prospective same-sex couples in particular know that their business was welcome in a new era of marriage equality in Illinois.

Heather Lynne Vickery—the owner and event director of Greatest Expectations Special Events & Weddings Inc.—put the evening together alongside Chicago History Museum Special Events Coordinator Jesse Pare. “Jesse was one of my past clients,” Vickery explained. “And when she was planning her wedding, we wanted to put something together that was elegant and upscale and make everyone feel welcome. Clearly we’re gearing this towards the LGBTQ community but it’s not just for them. We’ve welcomed everyone and want them to feel as if they can walk in and say ‘this is my party.’”

It was a party that had been in the planning stages since January. “We’ve been collaborating with all the vendors here,” Vickery said. “We want every couple to know that you can have a spectacular wedding without a huge budget and we can guide them to their perfect day.”

There were a number of hopeful LGBTQ couples looking for the right people to help

provide that day. Tanisha Young and Cecilia Pi a have been together two and a half years. Young said that the moment she met Pi a, she knew she was the one. “The universe put us together,” Young said with a smile. “I still ask her everyday if she’ll marry me.” Since Pi a has repeatedly said “yes”, the couple decided to attend One Love to meet vendors who not only demonstrated the style they were looking for but inclusiveness. “It’s very important,” Young said. “We can get married and we can go to a company but what if that company has different viewpoints on gay weddings and they don’t call us back? There’s been times when we’ve applied to apartments and Cecilia would tell them in an email that we’re a lesbian couple and they would not respond after that.”

Torre Gentile and Jay Khudai are looking at a 2016 wedding date. “We’ve got to get Jay through med school first,” Gentile said. “But while we’re planning it, I really appreciate being able to go to this event and see who we should do business with.” Khudai thinks events such as One Love have a richer significance. “It’s really important for expos like this to be happening in our community,” he said. “It helps us become more accepted in Chicago

and makes businesses aware that LGBTQ couples are here and willing to work with them.”

“Everyone was so excited to be on board for this,” said Barbara Siska, director of corporate events at the Chicago History Museum. “The vendors pulled it together in a relatively quick amount of time.” She added that—as far as the CHM is concerned—a wedding is a wedding and thus a momentous occasion no matter who is involved. “We welcome any couple in love,” she said. “We wanted an event like this to trigger some creative ideas for them.”

Livia Caporale and Andie Cumber were certainly equipped to do so. Their table was set up with a selection of hair extensions and accessories, make-up mirrors and an array of product designed to transform any pair of brides or grooms with a touch of glamour. Caporale has been in business for 13 years and offers on location hair and beauty services. “We go to wherever the couple is getting ready with friends and family,” she explained. “We make it super convenient and comfortable.”

“I feel like love is universal,” Cumber added. “It’s not gender or orientation specific. We want to let the LGBTQ community know that—on their wedding day—everybody deserves to look and feel amazing.”

Photos on page 23



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Photos from Chicago History Museum's One Love event

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Snapshots of Love

Bergfalk, Hansen wed

William (Bill) D. Bergfalk (left) and Roland C. Hansen were married in Illinois March 9 by Judge Stuart Katz. They were married at home with a small group of friends as witnesses.

They were first married in Canada in June 2003 with a celebration at Ann Sather restaurant that September.

They are now celebrating being together 29-plus years.

"We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of support and love sent to us by Facebook, cards, calls, e-mails and the like," the couple said.

Photo by Hal Baim



The four couples of the "Ohio Caravan" (see below for names) show off their certificates with Judge Martin Moltz (seated) and Cook County Director of Vital Records Timothy Dever (right). Photos by Matt Simonette



Heather Tribble and Megan Pitzer.



Chelsea Bolyard and Cara Blessing.



Shayla Shannon and Ashley Billey.



Jennifer Lape and Leah Kaiser.

Ohio 'caravan' members and Indiana guests wed in Chicago

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Just three days before a judge issued a ruling saying that the state of Ohio must recognize same-sex marriages performed elsewhere, three lesbian couples journeyed from the Buckeye State to Chicago as part of what they called a "marriage caravan."

The women, who were joined April 11 in Chicago by another couple, from Indiana, hoped to send a message to Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine not to appeal the marriage ruling, which had been scheduled for April 14.

The caravan was the brainchild of activist donors Rick Neal and Tom Grote of Columbus, Ohio, who brought along their two young daughters for the trip. Neal said the preliminary announcement of the decision was 'energizing' for the state's LGBT community and they wanted to do something to bring more marriages into Ohio. Neal and Grote had a commitment ceremony in 2007 and a Massachusetts wedding last year. Grote is a founding member of Equality Ohio.

Ashley Billey of Cleveland said she and her partner, Shayla Shannon, found out about the Caravan on Equality Ohio's Facebook page. The couple have been together for three years and "had been discussing our options," Billey said. "But now seemed like a good time, while everyone was in preparation for the judge's decision—we wanted it to have meaning."

Billey said that she and Shannon were excited about the prospect of having the marriage be official. "Without any rights in our own state, it's just a piece of paper."

Cara Blessing and Chelsea Bolyard of Columbus also have been together for 3 years, and said a primary motivation for them came from just having gone through custody issues. "We

want legal rights," said Blessing. "We want to protect our own legal rights and the rights of our children."

Jennifer Lape and Leah Kaiser of Columbus, together for six years, had long been considering in which state they should get married. Kaiser said they felt that the caravan provided "a great opportunity" to finally wed.

Photographers Amy Clark and Jackie Shull came along to document the trip.

Heather Tribble and Megan Pitzer, of Lafayette, Ind., and some of their family members, were in line behind the caravan group and struck up a conversation. They ultimately were invited to join a wedding ceremony at City Hall that afternoon—the County Clerk's Office waived the 24-hour waiting period for the eight visitors. Tribble said that they'd been together for six years and one month; they had gotten engaged one month prior, on their six-year anniversary.

After obtaining their licenses, the couples crossed the street to City Hall, where they crowded into the office of Judge Martin Moltz. The four couples were presented with complimentary copies of the "official" version of their marriage certificate by Cook County Director of Vital Records Timothy Dever once their ceremonies were over.

"That's the last time anyone will ever get anything free from Cook County," joked Moltz.

According to County Clerk's Office officials, the four couples were the 907th, 908th, 909th and 910th same-sex couples to be wed in Cook County.

The April 14 decision, handed down by U.S. District Judge Timothy Black, struck down portions of Ohio's constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and withholding legal respect for same-sex couples.

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Proposal marks Dance of the Western Suburbs

The women behind the Dance of the Western Suburbs saved the day not once, but twice. First, they resurrected the dance itself, which had been a very successful annual event of Women of the Western Suburbs. But when WOWS closed after decades of support last year, some of the women who loved the dance event resurrected it.

Then, two weeks before the event, their venue went bankrupt. Fortunately, the judge allowed them to cancel their check because

their's was the next event, and they found a new venue who could take them, Corcorde in Kildeer.

Among other things, Annette Bush proposed to her girlfriend of one year, Dawn Johnson, who said yes.

The sold-out event attracted 476 women from the city and all over the suburbs March 15.

Photos by Tracy Baim



Left and above: Annette Bush (in suit) proposed to her girlfriend of one year, Dawn Johnson; she said yes. Right: A group of women at Dance of the Western Suburbs. Photos by Tracy Baim



P'town to celebrate marriage equality in May

The gay mecca of Provincetown, Mass., will commemorate 10 years of marriage equality with a number of celebrations throughout the month of May.

People will be able to, among other things, join one of the couples that filed for a same-sex marriage license in Provincetown in 2004 as they renew their vows on their 10th anniversary on May 17; or participate in a symbolic unity ceremony at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House on May 18, among other things.

Celebration of marriage at MCA on June 2

On Monday, June 2, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago and Equality Illinois invite couples who are planning to get married to have their wedding at the MCA.

The MCA will offer a "Celebration of Marriage Equality" and opens its galleries and sculpture garden for complimentary ceremonies and post-ceremony festivities for up to 15 couples.

Couples interested in applying to be married at the MCA on June 2 can submit an application at <http://www2.mcachicago.org/marriageequality>. Beginning April 18, representatives from the MCA and Equality Illinois review the submissions and select 15 couples to get married at the MCA on June 2 between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. The selected couples will be informed no later than April 25.

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Frankly speaking...

Expert tips to plan your wedding expertly

BY FRANK J. ANDONOPLAS, MBC

Requesting the honor of your presence:

All about the paper

Once you have all of the major choices for your wedding selected (venue, photographer, videographer, music and officiant), it's time to move on to other details. This is where your wedding consultant can guide you to establish what is the most important and how much to spend on each category.

One of the first things you will need to order is save the dates. These are simple—just alerting your guests only to who are getting married, the date and the city. Also any travel information and hotel blocks should be included in when you save the date, so that guests can start to make travel plans. No other details are given, as these are saved for the invitation. "Save the dates" used to be optional, or just something to send to out-of-town guests, but have really become the norm.

Also, you will need to secure hotel rooms for your out-of-town guests. If your wedding is at a hotel, it will provide you a block of rooms. Sometimes you will need to get rooms at another price point, or will need rooms if your wedding is not at a hotel. Make sure you get rooms without an attrition clause: This way you are not obligated to sell all the rooms, since you really cannot control where your guests stay, as many are brand-loyal. Room blocks will end about a month before your wedding date, so be sure to indicate that on your "save the date." These should go out about nine to 12 months before the wedding. I love to suggest something different that will catch the guest's eyes and really stir excitement such as a refrig-

erator magnet, luggage tag or something with your photo on it, as some may have not met your fiancé(e) yet.

When picking out your "save your date," you can also pick out your invitations. Some couples like to have the "save the dates" and invites match or coordinate, but they don't have to. The invitation should set the tone of the wedding itself. You will need to order your invitation, reception card (if your reception is in a different location from where the ceremony is) and the RSVP set. Additionally, you can in-

clude the hotel information and a directions/map card as well.

I suggest numbering your guests, and then penciling that number on the back of the RSVP card very small on the back. It will make receiving your RSVPs easier when you can't read a guest's writing, and there is no return address. Make sure you stamp these with return postage. Also consider thinking outside the box and doing something unexpected if your style dictates that. I have done invitations sent in stunning silk boxes, tied with French ribbon and secured with a brooch. I have also done fun invitations that were a ViewMaster, a jigsaw puzzle or a chocolate bar.

As for addressing, you should have all the addresses from your "save the dates," with any changes that you may have noted since this mailing. You can have the invitations hand-addressed by yourself, a family member or a professional calligrapher—or have the invitation company print the name and address on the envelope. I suggest taking a finished invitation to the post office to measure and weigh for proper postage. Then, since you are there, you can pick stamps that fit your theme, or you can order personalized stamps online. These can be fun, as you download a photo onto them. Make sure you figure costs of addressing and postage into your wedding budget.



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BY DERRICK CLIFTON

What started as a hobby for one gay couple from North Carolina translated into a move westward to Chicago, where their passion for hospitality has become their full-time profession.

Bruce Boyd and Wayne Cartwright are the co-owners and innkeepers at Lang House Bed & Breakfast, formerly known as Cat's Cradle Bed & Breakfast, located at 7421 N. Sheridan Rd. The couple of 28 years relocated to Chicago six years ago for jobs, accompanied by their child, a 13-year-old Welsh terrier named Bosco. In the process, they left behind their first bed and breakfast, Tree Tops, which the duo operated in their spare time.

"We loved it. I baked fresh chocolate-chip cookies [for guests] all the time," Boyd said, adding that he and Cartwright are excited about starting a similar establishment on Chicago's North Side. "We liked the idea of having an urban setting for a bed and breakfast because most people don't think of them being in large urban areas."

Before Lang House became a bed-and-breakfast, it was a private residence for a number of families. When the home was originally erected in 1919 by architect Edgar M. Newman, what's known today as Rogers Park was instead called Birchwood Beach Estates. There were no high-rise buildings nor were there apartment buildings on the lots between the mansion and the lakefront, and the families enjoyed a view of Lake Michigan.

Within the last couple years, Boyd and Cartwright began the renovation and restoration process for the house, a four-square Prairie-style mansion that they say is most practical to operate as a rental property instead of a private residence. That also goes for the next door property they also manage, the Emil Bach House, which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in

1915 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Wright's heavy influence on Newman's design of Lang House reflects in various details of the home, including the style and pattern of the stained glass windows. Starting in April, the Emil Bach House will open as a vacation and events rental.

"Part of the reason for Lang House being a bed and breakfast and [the Emil Bach House] being a vacation rental is that it's very costly to restore them and keep them up," said Boyd, who added it'd be hard for most modern-day single families to handle all the particulars. "It's one way of making them useful in today's society."

Lang House also has historic ties with other neighborhood institutions. Near the time it was built, the Touhy and Rogers families gradually developed the marshland in the area, advertising the lots as a 'country club beach style getaway,' according to the Lang House website. Both families have named streets nearby, and the Rogers family's contributions to the area's development were recognized when the neighborhood was renamed Rogers Park. During World War II, Mundelein College used the mansion as a dormitory before the all-female Roman Catholic college merged with Loyola University Chicago. The basement also housed the budding operations of one local radio station.

Decades later, Boyd and Cartwright have taken both Lang House and the historic landmark next door, working down to the finest details—including items such as painting pigments and brick styles—to renovate each mansion for historical accuracy and open them up to the community. The revamped bed and breakfast is becoming increasingly popular as a venue for weddings and receptions, including four same-sex couples who have reserved the event space for their celebrations in June.

Turn to page 29



Lang House owners Wayne Cartwright (left) and Bruce Boyd. Photos on these two pages by Derrick Clifton and Kirk Williamson



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Exteriors of Lang House (above) and the Emil Bach House (below).



B&B from page 28

"We're making it a point to let the LGBT community know that this bed and breakfast is a place where they can relax comfortably in a welcoming environment within a diverse neighborhood," Boyd said, adding that the home has gotten an influx of LGBT guests, but remains open to guests of all backgrounds.

All five rooms available for rent are located on the second floor, with the owners residing on the third floor, ready and available to assist guests at any time. Each room features a private bathroom, with heated floors and heated towel bars, and all five rooms are equipped with unique furnishing and decor for a distinct look and feel.

Other amenities include a basement sauna with an on-call massage therapist, as well as a spacious lounge area equipped with games, a shuffleboard table and flat screen televisions. Various customers in the neighborhood have used Lang House like a spare bedroom or guestroom, housing friends and family members visiting from out of town.

Boyd and Cartwright will host an LGBT open house event April 27, allowing community members a special opportunity to tour the property. Guided tours of the Emil Bach home will be offered beginning May 7. Tickets will be \$12 to the general public.

"We want to open it up for the neighbors so that people know it is part of the community," Boyd said. "Then they'll know what's happening here."

For more information on Lang House Bed & Breakfast, including reservations, rates and other specific features, visit www.langhousechicago.com.



A guestroom (above) and the dining room (below) at Lang House.

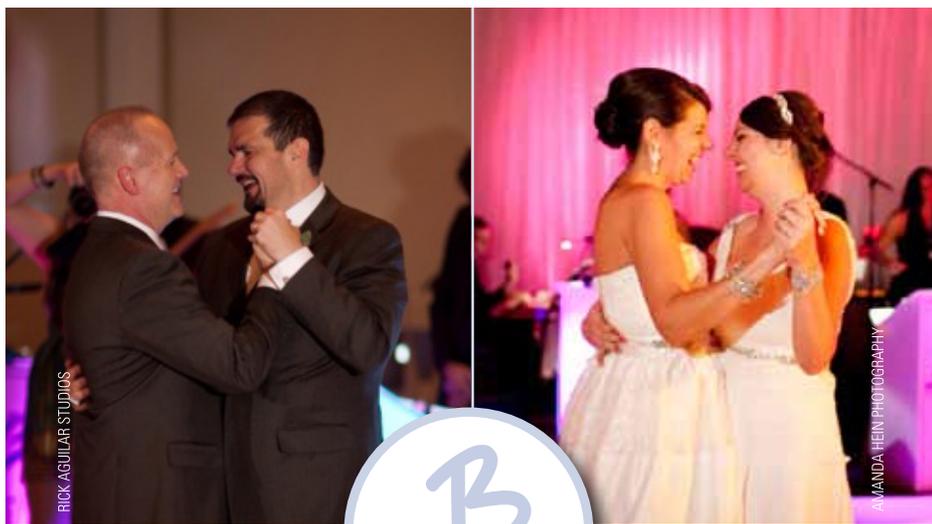


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Photos of Villa Loretta.

Villa Loretta adds a touch of Hollywood to your wedding

BY GARY M. KRAMER

Need a touch of Hollywood elegance for your wedding? For couples willing to travel to fabulous Palm Springs, Villa Loretta, a property actress Loretta Young owned from 1993 until her death in Los Angeles in 2000, is a classy retreat for a destination wedding or a honeymoon getaway.

Villa Loretta, a 37,000-square-foot gated estate, is now available for parties and stays. The stylish property, which sits on a quarter-acre, features a chef's galley kitchen, a Travertine floor living room with a domed 14-foot ceiling, a cozy fireplace, and grand piano. The back yard has a saltwater pool, a Jacuzzi, and a stunning view of the mountains.

Windy City Times spoke with owner/proprietor Chris Bennett about Villa Loretta via Skype, and got a virtual tour of the property. Bennett, an Illinois native (and California transplant) also co-created "Everybody Has the Right" a pro-Marriage Equality anthem, that is also suitable for same-sex weddings.

Windy City Times: How did you find Villa Loretta?

Chris Bennett: I discovered this place in Palm Springs in December 2013. During the season [November-April], about 500,000 people live here, and over the last twenty years, the gay population has grown. Finding Villa Loretta was one of those serendipitous moments. My divorce was final. I sold my property and I started looking for a place in Los Angeles. My angels said go to Palm Springs. I saw this house—I had to see it anyway—and I walked in and it felt like "home."

It has never been open to the public before, so as an entertainer, I'm going to use it for concerts, or rentals. This is a glamorous Hollywood movie star home, not country club. It has complete privacy and it's paradise here.

WCT: You are a singer/performer. What prompted you to create a gay-marriage anthem?

CB: I've been in the entertainment business forever. When the first George Bush tried to pass a constitutional amendment [against marriage equality], my friend Michael Thurber, who was an advocate for marriage equality, talked about doing a song. I happened to be in the room, and my songwriting partner and I came up with "Everybody Has a Right."

We like to write anthems for causes. I was interested in gay marriage—because I performed for gay audience and have many gay best friends. Marriage is a civil right—if you can't visit your partner in the hospital that's not right. It's ignorance and fear that people don't get that. Everyone has the right, as the song goes. The new generation wonders, "What's the big deal?" So I'm happy marriage equality going to eventually happen nationwide.

WCT: What plans do you have for couples that want to get married at Villa Loretta?

CB: Palm Springs is a great gay wedding destination. If you are in cold, snowy, Chicago—a wedding in Palm Springs sounds good, doesn't it? [Laughs] I'm connected through my friends here to help couples navigate arrangements for florists and music, etc. to help folks find what they need. And I'll work with them up with

a budget. Villa Loretta can accommodate sit down dinners for 100 or mingle parties for 250.

WCT: As a musician, you must prefer a band over a DJ. What are your thoughts on wedding music?

CB: I'm old-school. There is nothing like live music; it's my personal preference. Some folks don't want a big band or a jazz combo or a string orchestra. There are some good, talented musicians out here. But a great DJ can do that

too. The house is equipped throughout with a Bang and Olufsen system.

WCT: Villa Loretta also sounds like a good honeymoon destination, even if couples decide to tie the knot elsewhere.

CB: It's an exotic house. You can rent it and cook, or get concierge services—a chef, masseuse, yoga teacher—whatever you want. There are palm trees, sun, a warm saltwater pool, and a Jacuzzi. When the master bath was remodeled, they put in a waterfall and outdoor shower. It can be clothing optional!

WCT: What gossip can you provide about Loretta Young?

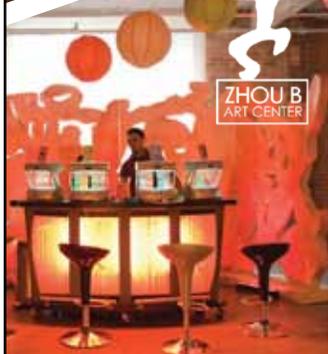
CB: She had a few happy years here. Her early scandal was having Clark Gable's child, Judy

Lewis [Gable]. She never made that public, and went to great lengths to hide it, but she confessed this to her [daughter]. Loretta went through Catholic guilt over that. She once said, "Exercise for her was not swimming in the pool, but walking across her living room." The previous owners left me all the old photos, so there are still images of her hanging in the media room. I should have a Loretta party, and have ladies dress up in flowing gowns and the men come as Clark Gable!

Interested in Villa Loretta? Contact Chris Bennett at 310-869-3465 or visit www.lavillaloretta.com for calendars and rates.

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EAT ART



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Gay and Lesbian Wedding Guide

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see also **VENUES**

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Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas.

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