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LGBTQ

Wedding Special Events Guide

SEVENTH EDITION • 2017



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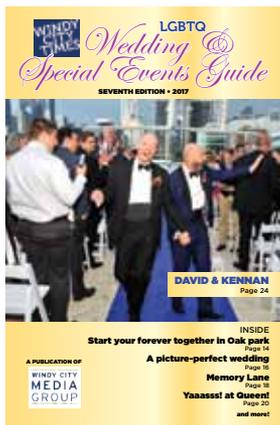
Wedding & Special Events Guide

**SEVENTH EDITION
2017**

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COVER PHOTO

Couple Kennan Abbo (right) & David Weiner at their June 20, 2015, wedding on Chicago Elite Private Yacht, Entertainment Cruises.

*Photo by Jon Weiner Photography
Videographer: Sonnet Wedding Films
<http://www.sonnetweddingfilms.com>
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Makeup by Eileen McNulty
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SNAPSHOTS OF LOVE

We asked readers to send in photos of their weddings to share with the community. What we received was a collection of beautiful stories of love and commitment.

All photos courtesy of subjects except where otherwise indicated.

Alissa Pagels (left) and **Bethany Minor** are officially the Pagels-Minors now, after getting married in Santorini, Greece on March 13. Planning and concept by Kesh Events.

Photos courtesy of Rebecca Marie Photography



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FRANKLY SPEAKING ...

Tips from Chicago's only Master Wedding Planner



BY FRANK J. ANDONOPLAS, MBC

Planning a wedding can be a very stressful and time-consuming time of your life. Here are some helpful tips for those planning your own wedding that I have found to be helpful in my 24 years of designing, detailing and managing weddings.

-Hotel blocks for guests: Make sure you use a hotel that does not have an attrition clause. You can't control where your guests will stay, as many are hotel brand loyal. This way, you are not contractually obligated to sell all the rooms in your block. Any unsold rooms will be released to the general public one month before your wedding. Also, a few weeks before your block cut-off date, request a rooming list so you can review it and make sure that if any key out-of-town guests haven't reserved, check in with them and remind them they only have a few weeks left.

-RSVPs: I actually number the guest list, and then write that number on the back of the RSVP card. It will speed up the process of recording that RSVP when it comes back. Also, it saves you when you can't read the handwriting of the guest or they forget to put their name on the RSVP (oh, yes this happens); you will know who it is. Many don't even use a return address, which is also remedied by this method.

-Seating: Most of the time, you will assign guests to tables via escort card and sometimes which seat at the table via place card. This process always seems to take longer than anti-

ipated. Realize that some will not be happy with their table assignments and with whom they are sitting. Guests need to respect that you, as the host/hostess of the event, have sat them at a specific table for a specific reason. It's only 90 minutes or so, and they should be able to sit elsewhere after dinner (or lunch or brunch) is completed. Additionally, if you are offering a pre-selected choice of entrée (on the RSVP card), you should "code" the top of the place card so the wait staff know which entrée that guest selected so they don't have to ask. Most guests forget anyway. If you are not doing formal seating, I suggest reserving a few tables for family. This way, Grandma knows where to put her purse.

-Floral: Try to repurpose everything from the ceremony at the reception. It will save a lot of money. Whether it's moving floral arrangements from the church altar to the reception entrance or on each side of your head table or orchestra, or using your centerpieces to create an aisle at the same ceremony venue, you will save money by reusing these florals.

-Transportation: To save money, try to charter one larger vehicle instead of many smaller ones. Not only will it save you money, it will keep everyone together, especially when you are trying to get photos done in a few hours between ceremony and reception.

Lastly, if you are not using a wedding consultant or planner to assist you with the whole wedding, consider hiring a wedding pro to assist on a limited basis. I offer an option of a



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Oak Park, the charming and progressive village that hugs Chicago's West Side, offers the best of both worlds: only eight miles from Chicago's Loop, it captures the buzzy energy of urban living while maintaining the welcoming sense of suburban community. As the first village in Illinois to roll out a domestic-partner-

ship registry, serving as a model for other communities to develop their own, Oak Park has a long history of inclusiveness—and its striking architectural marvels, historic spaces and tree-lined brick roads are the picture-perfect backdrop for your biggest day yet.



The ballroom at the 19th Century Club.

Photo courtesy of Visit Oak Park

Venues

Home to Oak Park's largest ballroom, the 19th Century Club is fresh on the heels of a massive restoration but retains its historical stylings and significance. Notable architectural touches can be found at every turn in the ballroom, lounge room, and dining spaces, while the stage and grand piano accommodate musical performers of many varieties.

Take your wedding to the rolling countryside without straying far from the city at the Cheney Mansion. Designed to be reminiscent of an English country home, this 12,000-square-foot jewel boasts many spacious reception rooms and is surrounded by a 2.5 acre garden with tranquil ponds, colorful flowers, and towering trees.



Interior of the Pleasant Home.

Photo courtesy of Visit Oak Park

Considered one of the earliest examples of Prairie-style architecture in the county, the Pleasant Home is a striking 30-room mansion that beautifully showcases 19th century craftsmanship with its ornate woodwork and vibrant art glass. The elegant dining room, sprawling front porch and music room offer additional space to accommodate guests.

What do you get when you take one of the

turn to page 22



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A PICTURE-PERFECT WEDDING



On Saturday, March 25, 2017, Anna DeShawn, founder/CEO of E3 Radio, married Kaya Rainey at Stan Mansion, surrounded by family and friends. Here are some treasured moments from their wedding album.

Rev. Vernice Thorn has pronounced Anna (right) & Kaya married for the first time.

Photo courtesy of Severe Photographics, lighting and drape by Art of Imagination, flowers by Plump Chicago



Above: Pictured left to right. Marie Harrison, Tiffany Paxton, Trina Jackson, Debbie Hopkins, Nikki Powell, Eboni Montsho, Jackie Payets, Brandee Dyson, Kaya Rainey, Anna DeShawn Rainey, Jace Smith, Yolanda Givins, Javarus Mack, Dionne Dyson, Phenomenon the Poet, Kia Olive, TJ Hunter, Latoya Bailey, Tara Walters.

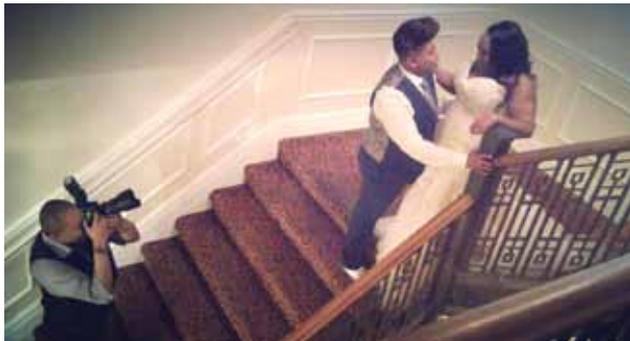
Photo courtesy of Severe Photographics



Above: Wedding cake by Vanille Patisserie.



Above: The wedding hosts. Pictured left to right: Kareen Bellevue, London Jador, Phyl Shisha, Debbie Bennett, Teffina Gray. Below: Anna and Kaya being photographed by Marco of Severe Photographics.

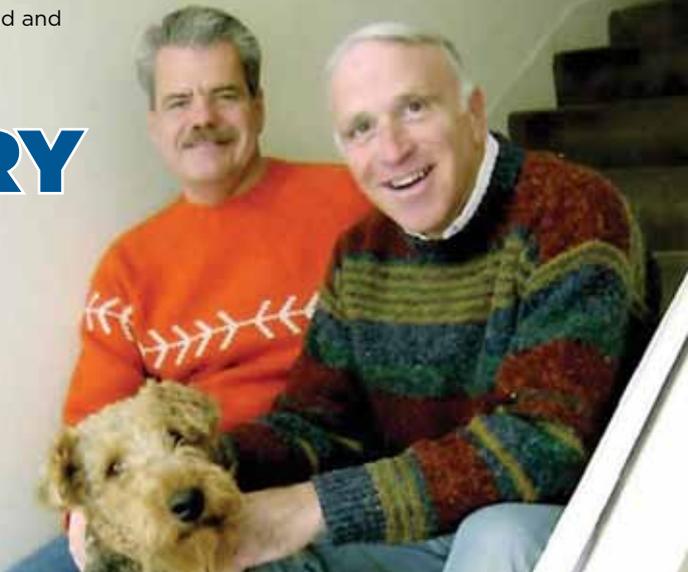


Thomas Senesac, Bob Hoagland and their dog, Cody.

Photo courtesy of Hoagland

MEMORY LANE

Hoagland, Senesac and 'a little piece of immortality'



BY LIZ BAUDLER

When Bob Hoagland and Thomas Senesac moved to Wicker Park in 1987, it was to escape rapidly gentrifying Lincoln Park. The couple planned to stay for as long as it took them to not be underwater on the two-story property they'd purchased. They stayed for 30 years.

"It's a beautiful neighborhood. When we moved in, there were quite a few gay couples here. In those days, gay couples tended to be the pioneers of gentrification. There was a lot of property that could benefit from being fixed up," Hoagland remembered.

Many changes have come to what Hoagland called "the best block in the city." Gay couples left and now families routinely cycle through, leaving when they have kids. "We never really seriously talked about moving," Hoagland said. "We weren't standoffish. Oh, we don't want to get to know these straight people. I never expect to be rejected because I'm gay, so I'm perfectly confident to go out and engage people with the totality of who I am. We reached out, and people responded positively. I think that's validation."

The hardest change of all came when Senesac died of cancer in 2014. "A lot of people would call Thomas the mayor of the block," said Hoagland, who described his partner as incredibly charming and often larger than life. "I know a lot of people love me, and proved it

while Thomas was sick and dying, and being there for me and doing things."

Neighbors offered to maintain Senesac's garden while he was ill, a reflection of all the small favors the couple had done for them over the years. The two were famous for their annual Christmas party and for always welcoming new neighbors with offers of support. It's a legacy Ald. Joe Moreno honored last June, with an honorary street sign at the corner of Damen and Crystal.

"Thomas was, and I am, a very outgoing and friendly person," said Hoagland. "We would do the time-honored stoop sitting. We would come home from work on a nice day, we'd get a beverage, sit on the front steps and talk about our day before we went in to make dinner. The neighbors would come by and stop and say hello, and we'd say, 'You want a beer?' Eventually it became sort of a social clearinghouse for the block. It was lovely. It forged connections. It was what I think makes a neighborhood a neighborhood."

Senesac was also notable for his business, Acme Prop Rental, which supplied Hollywood films and helped John Hughes get his start in movies. Despite a warehouse brimming with material, occasionally inspiration struck a little closer to home for Senesac.

"I came home one day and the four-poster bed was gone," Hoagland laughed. "It was gone for two weeks and then it came back.

You just laughed; it was always a surprise. It was kind of cool to see things that you own in a movie. It was a delight to live with someone like that. I'm a little more linear and organized, so we made a good team."

Hoagland thinks their partnership benefited from the relationships they built around them: "When you're involved in a community, it helps your relationship because it's just something bigger than you are," he said. "We always tried to live our lives to the fullest, because, I think, we had no one to depend on but each other. We didn't have kids to take care of and society wasn't always that encouraging of us. We have to make our own universe and our own happiness. Ultimately that's true for everyone, but our circumstance of being gay made us think about it constantly, and consciously do something about it instead of just drifting through life."

Now, when he sees honorary street signs around the city, Hoagland said he wonders about the stories behind them.

"I'm this little kid from the Northwest Side of the city that had blue collar parents. It's still amusing to me that any of this is happening,"

he said. "I stood there the day the street sign was unveiled. and I looked at people from many different parts of my life, but primarily from the block, and thought, oh my god, what a blessing this group of people is who love me and support me and lift me up."

Although he passed away before he saw it, Senesac knew about the street sign: The honor was years in the making. Hoagland remembered Moreno asking him what Senesac would think of the idea.

"I said, 'he would be overwhelmed and I can't think of anything better,'" Hoagland recalled. "In the whole journey from when [Thomas] was diagnosed with cancer I saw him cry only a few times. That was one of them, and that time, it was happy crying."

The sign is something Hoagland encounters every day, when he walks his 16-year-old dog down the block he's called home for 30 years.

"I'm still surprised to see it there," he said. "Like, god, it's real. It still feels not real in some dimension—a little piece of immortality. Doesn't all of us want a little piece of immortality?"

—Originally printed in *Windy City Times*



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Local drag royalty Lucy Stoolie chose Sunday, January 29, at the popular Queen! party at SmartBar as the time and place to pop the question to her boyfriend, photographer Erik Michael Kommer. Erik said yes, to the delight of the crowd.

The proposal was a celebration of the five years that the pair has been together.

They were previously featured on the cover of Nightspots magazine, with Lucy "out of face" as Ty Huey.

*Photos from the proposal courtesy of Erik M. Kommer
Photography: Nightspots photo by Kirk Williamson*



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OAK PARK

from page 13

most innovative structures in the world and give it a \$23 million makeover? Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple is slated to reopen to the public in July 2017 following a comprehensive restoration, so guests for any occasion will be

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few hours to be your lifeline during the planning process. I make myself available to answer questions, give advice and make referrals to vendors. It can save you a lot of time, as well as saving you from making an expensive mistake. Also, think about hiring a wedding day director to be there to manage all the little details on the wedding day. This way, you and your family can relax and enjoy the most important day of your life.

Frank J. Andonoplas has designed social and corporate events all over the country since 1992. Frank is an active member of the Association of Bridal Consultants and is one of only 73 Master Wedding Consultants worldwide. Frank was named Event planner of the year in 2012. His expertise has been featured in wedding magazines on as well as local television segments in addition to the Early Show, and 20/20. For more information www.frankeventdesign.com



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SNAPSHOTS OF LOVE

Kennan Abbo (left in below photo) wed David Weiner on June 20, 2015. Chicago's Elite Yacht made the beautiful Chicago skyline the backdrop to this couple's ceremony. With one Greek Orthodox and one Jewish groom, the Rev. Padraig McGuire created an interfaith ceremony that fused elements of both traditions. Guests were requested to dress to a Gatsby theme. Undaunted by rain, guests danced until late-night fireworks and lightning bolts against the glittering Chicago skyline capped the evening.

Photos by Jon Weiner Photography



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see also **VENUES**

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