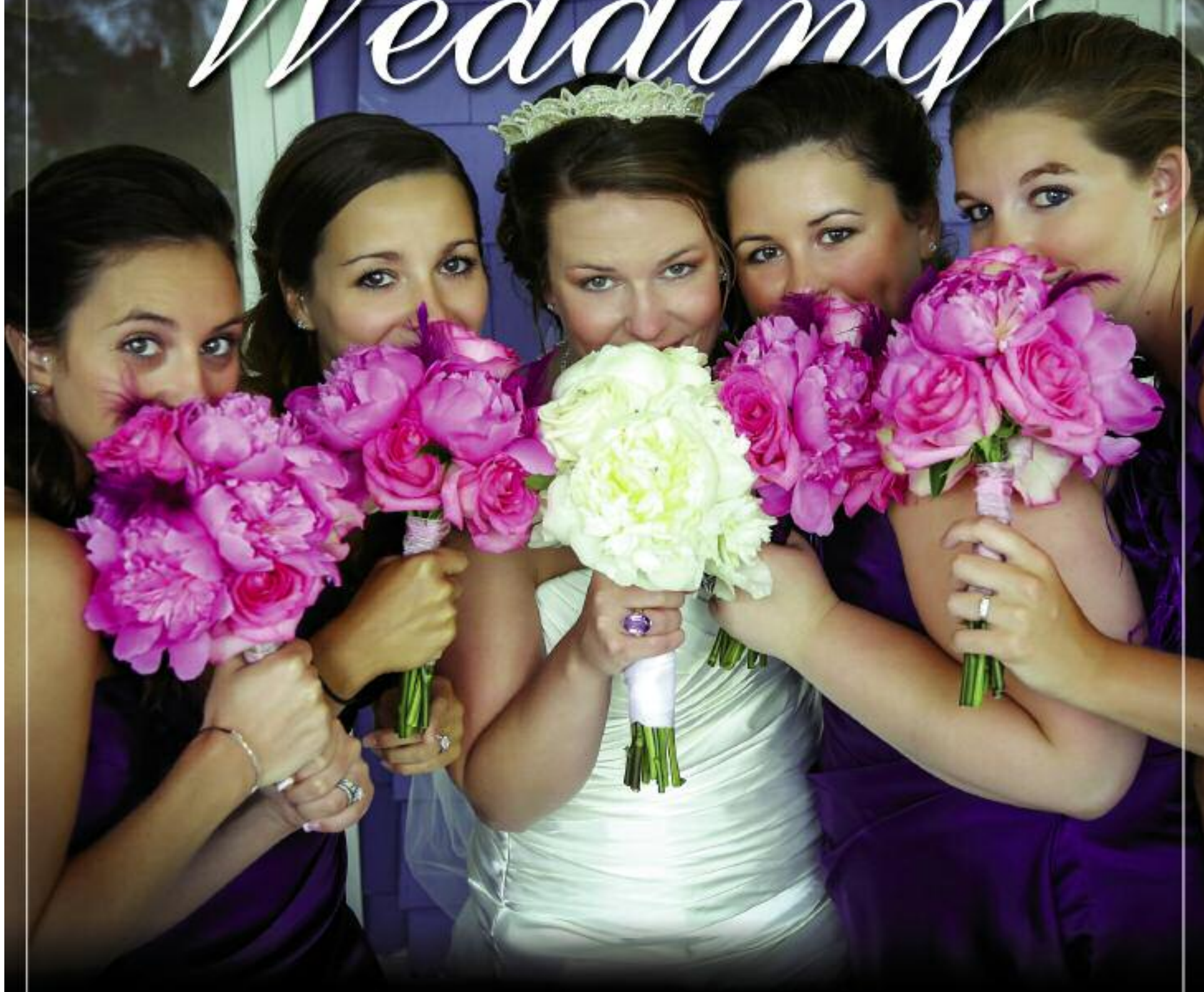


Northeastern Vermont & Northern New Hampshire

Wedding



The 2013 Bridal Guide from The Caledonian-Record & The Orleans County Record



KAYLA LINK TOSSES HER BOUQUET.

ON THE COVER

The winners of our Bridal Guide Cover Photo Contest are Nick and Elise St. Cyr of Northumberland, N.H. For submitting their photo online and receiving the most votes, they won a \$500 getaway at Jay Peak Resort!

Featured in the cover photo are bride Elise St. Cyr, and bridesmaids, from left, Heather Oyler of Largo, Fla., Chelsey Kenison of Concord, N.H., Michelle McVetty of Lancaster, N.H., and Kate Christopher of Lancaster, N.H.

Read more about our cover-winning couple on page 8.

MEET OUR COUPLES

In this year's Wedding Guide, we have the opportunity to meet a group of interesting and diverse couples who were married between summer 2011 and fall 2012.

These dozen couples have stories to share on everything from how the guys popped the question (and yes, in this bunch, the men did all the asking!), to innovative do-it-yourself wedding ideas, to the most memorable moments they carry from their wedding day. Turn the page for brief profiles of each of our couples, and then follow them through their wedding journey in both words and pictures.

We hope that everything they have shared will help inspire you to create the wedding of your dreams.

Now turn the page and get started on your own bridal adventure...

WEDDINGS

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Find a complete index on page 31.



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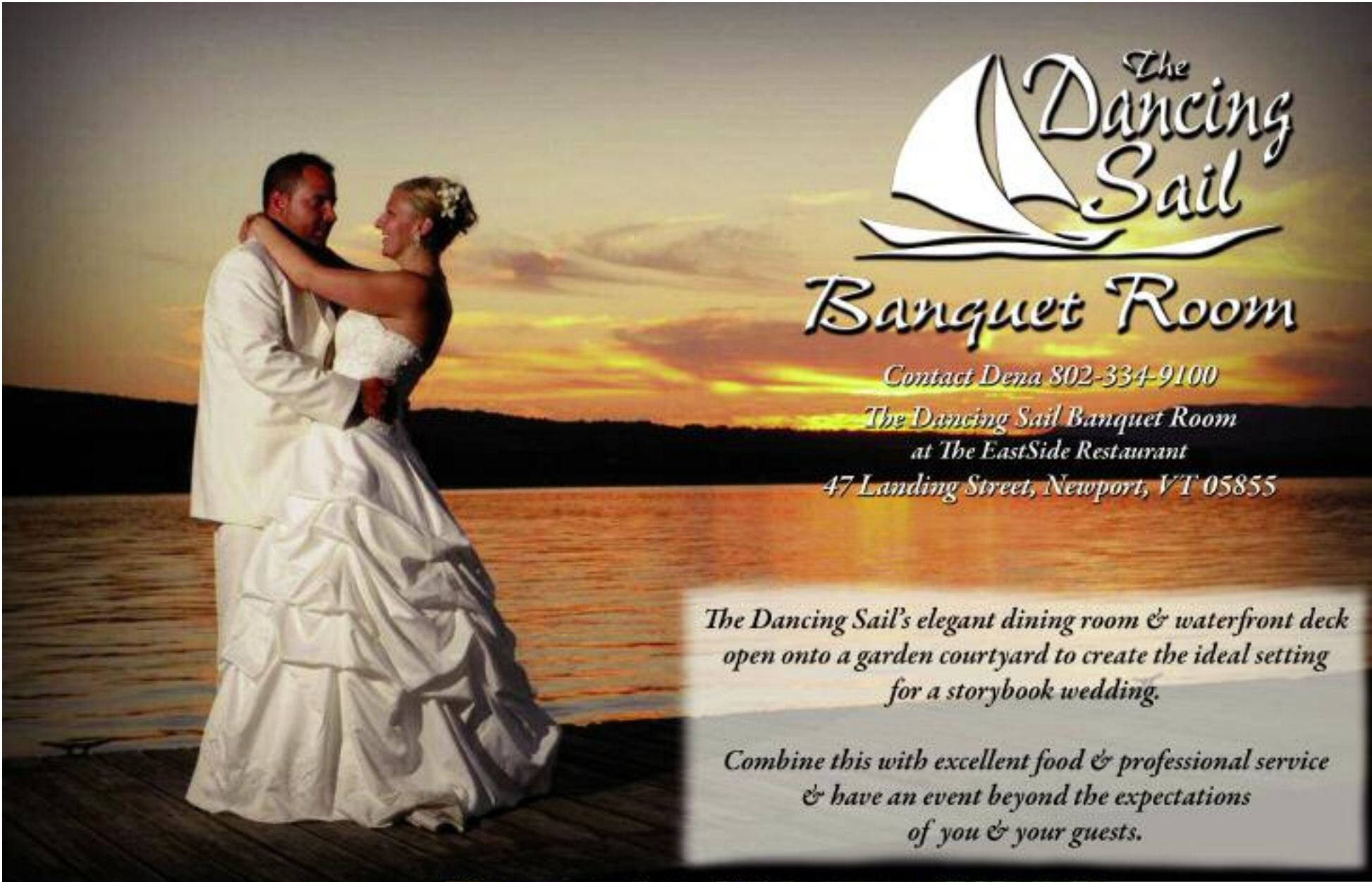
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The Vincents

Megan, 25, and **Eli**, 25, of Littleton, N.H.

Married: Sept. 22, 2012, at The Franconia Guest House, Franconia, N.H.

Budget: \$2500 for 160 people

A "quality person"—Although it had always confused Megan when people said they "just knew," she discovered it was true with Eli. "I don't know how to explain that feeling," she said. Eli knows exactly how to explain it: "I knew she was a quality person from day one. ... Even though we may look like we didn't quite know what we were doing because it was so fast, there's definitely no regrets whatsoever. Every day that goes by I just thank God that I married her."

Read more stories of how our couples knew they had found "The One" on page 14.

The Charests

Cindy, 26, and **Matt**, 35, of Berlin, N.H.

Married: Sept. 15, 2012, at the Harvest Christian Fellowship, Berlin, N.H.

Budget: \$15,000 for 150 guests

Not what she expected: Cindy's dress was exactly the opposite of what she thought she wanted. "I tried on one of every style dress that I could. It was actually the last dress that I tried on, and it ... was kind of a princess-y dress. It's not what I wanted at all because that's not me, but I put it on and it was the one. I put it on just to say I'd put a princess dress on, and it was the one!"

Read more stories of saying "Yes" to the dress on page 12.



The Leonards

Caitlin, 34, and **Jay**, 42, of St. Johnsbury / Stowe

Married: Oct. 1, 2011, at Jay Peak

Budget: \$12,000 for 180 guests

Vermont style: "We saw those hats and we grabbed them not knowing when we would wear them," said Caitlin. "But then the weather ended up being 40 degrees and snowing at the top of the mountain, so we thought let's just embrace it. We put them on for all of our photos. It was just that one point where we said, let's just embrace the fact that we're having a Vermont wedding in October at the top of a mountain."

See other unique ideas to inspire your wedding on page 26.



The Toney

Jessie, 31, and **Brian**, 29 of Monroe, N.H.

Married: Sept. 1, 2012, at a private residence in West Barnet

Budget: "I have no idea, but we didn't go into debt" for 175 guests

Worth the wait: "We've been living together for a few years," said Jessie. "I think it was great that we had lived together. And I think it's good that we also waited as many years as we did. We both went into it wiser about each other, because when we met we were younger and still trying to figure out ourselves."

Read about Jessie's clever do-it-yourself bridesmaid dresses on page 27.



The St. Cyr

Elise, 27, and **Nick**, 31, of Northumberland, N.H.

Married: June 23, 2012, at The Spalding Inn, Whitefield, N.H.

Budget: \$30,000 for 175 guests

Getting the cover-winning shot: "We were going to have cocktail hour outside, but it rained. We waited on the porch to be introduced, so my maid of honor said, 'Let's put our flowers in front of our face.'" Her bridesmaids were a big part of her planning and helped her along every step of the way, so she submitted their photo for our cover contest. She also figured, "A picture with more people is apt to get more votes!"

Read more about our cover-winning couple on page 8.



The Woods

Kate, 27, and **Chris**, 27, of Littleton, N.H.

Married: April 14, 2012, at The Maplewood in Bethlehem, N.H.

Budget: \$7,000 for 130 guests

Without this rings: "I was about to come down the aisle," said Kate, "and all of a sudden my father-in-law came down the aisle and said, 'Where are the rings?' I said, 'What???' I don't know! They started playing 'Here Comes The Bride.' Just when I got up there, I saw his dad handing the rings up to the best man. I have a little theater in my background so I figured 'the show must go on.' The wedding party was collecting their rings and were going to have us use their rings."

Read more memorable wedding moments on page 22.



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The Pikes**Ariel**, 21, and **Jonathan**, 21, of North Haverhill, N.H.**Married:** Sept. 15, 2012, at a private residence on Lake Morey in Fairlee, Vt.**Budget:** \$15,000 for 165 guests

Word to the wise: Ariel didn't hesitate when asked if she had any advice for other young brides who are planning their weddings now. "Definitely don't be a Bridezilla! It's not worth it at all. I let the girls choose things and help."

See some of The Pikes clever photo ideas on page 24.

The Siddiquis**Leona**, 27, and **Hasan**, 28, of Greensboro and Michigan**Married:** Oct. 6, 2012, on Green Mountain Monastery

A "potluck of traditions": Leona and Hasan brought together elements of Judaism, Christianity, Sufism into an international, multi-ethnic wedding. "That's common in Sufism. It's a huge melting pot. Everybody is just from all over the world and they're all just integrated as one family," said Hasan. "As far as interfaith marriage in general, it's kind of a beautiful thing to bring cultures together."

Read the full story of their multicultural wedding on page 29.

**The Berniers****Paula** and **Roger** of St. Johnsbury**Married:** July 23, 2011, at Willoughby Lake**Budget:** Under \$2,000 for 100 guests

Best-laid plans: As a second marriage for both Roger and Paula, they originally planned to elope. But their kids (they each have two from previous relationships), talked them into a real wedding. After the wedding, the kids said they wouldn't have minded an elopement, but Roger thinks it made a difference. "I think it was a good thing for the two girls to see. She was single for eight years and there wasn't a steady father figure. So I think some of that was good for them to see."

Learn Roger's sure-fire plan to craft the perfect proposal on 7.

**The Links****Kayla**, 25, and **Matt**, 27, of St. Johnsbury**Married:** Aug. 4, 2012, at Attitash Grand Summit, Bartlett, N.H.**Budget:** Didn't set a budget for 150 guests

Keeping a day for themselves: "I was kind of expecting a proposal soon, but I wasn't expecting it that night at all. It took me by surprise. He had always known that I wanted it to be just us and not around a holiday, just our own day," said Kayla. "I just felt like a lot of people get engaged around a holiday and I wanted to be kind of selfish and not share a day with a holiday."

Read the rest of their engagement story on page 6.

**The Broomes****Heidi**, 37, and **George**, 50, of St. Johnsbury**Married:** July 9, 2011, on a boat dock at Island Pond**Budget:** Under \$2,000 for 200 guests

Going casual: As a second marriage for both George and Heidi, they'd already done the big white wedding once before. This time they wanted a day that would reflect the easy-going, relaxed people that they are. "We wanted something low-key and enjoyable," said George. "Of course a lot of our friends are pretty easy going and not the type who love to dress up a lot, so it made it a lot more comfortable for everyone. Even the food was casual."

Read more about George & Heidi's on-the-dock affair on page 20.

**The Howards****Ariana**, 28, and **Trevor**, 40, of Littleton, N.H.**Married:** Aug. 18, 2012, at Ivie Memorial Church, Bethlehem, N.H.**Not wasting any time:**

"We met a while ago, about five years ago, in Woodsville after a basketball game. We dated ever since then. I was interested in him but I didn't think it was anything serious. ... We decided to get married in March or April and then we

set our date for August 18. We knew we wanted to marry each other, so let's not waste any more time!"

Read pro tips for getting great photos like the Howards' on page 18.



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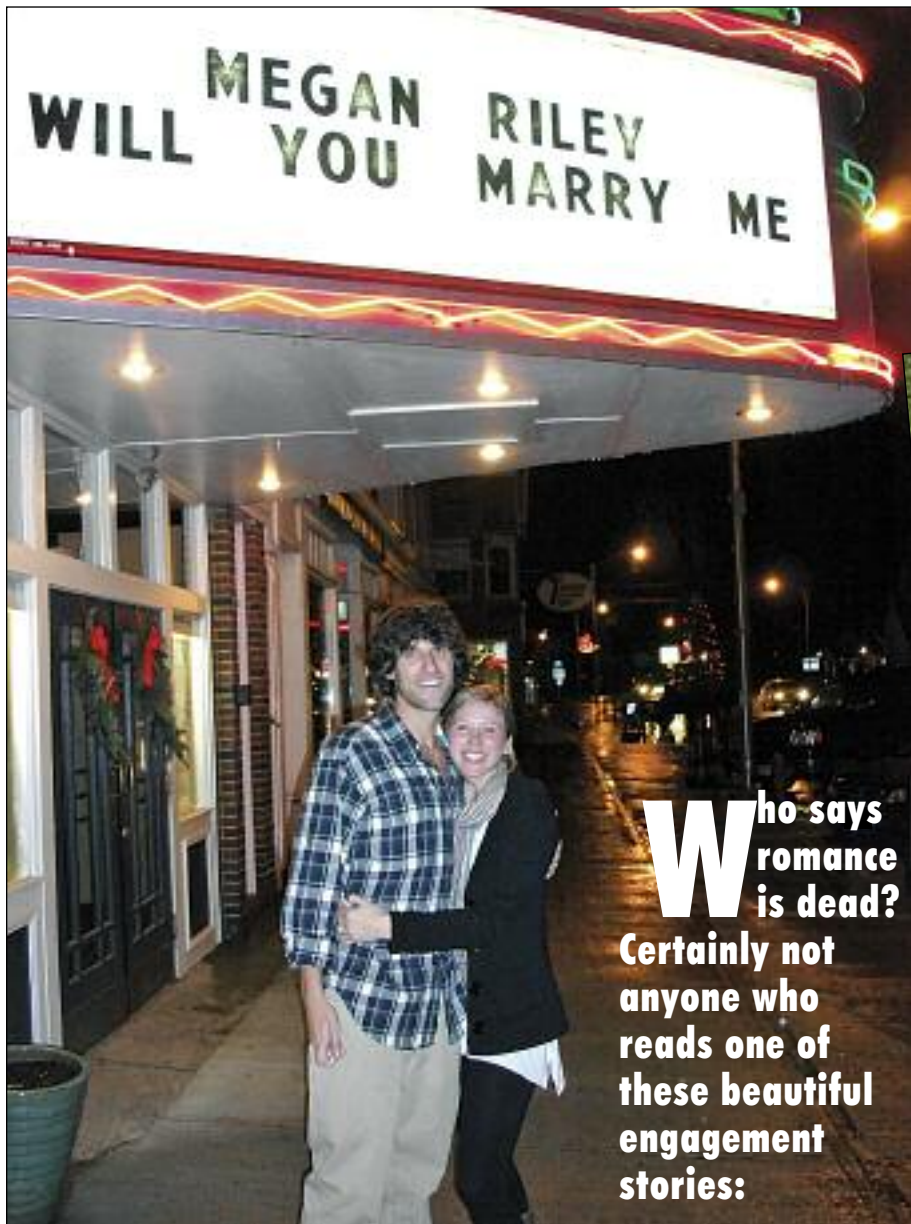
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Who says romance is dead? Certainly not anyone who reads one of these beautiful engagement stories:

POPPING THE QUESTION ...

The Magic Moment

"I knew she was a quality person from day one, so I knew that I wanted to make the proposal very special," Eli said. "I didn't want to be too cliché."

He went to the management at The Rialto in Lancaster, N.H., and asked if he could use their resources. "I put it up on the marquee and made a little play to drive her into Lancaster. I tried to bring up the Rialto so she might look at it without my having to look at it."

Megan didn't take the easy hint, so Eli pulled over. "She looked up and saw it. I ran over to the other side of the car and got down on my knee."



"It was raining, so it was romantic," said Megan.

They had talked marriage and even looked at rings together. Megan had found the ring she wanted and a jeweler gave them a card with all the details. "A few weeks later, I wanted to look at the ring online, so I asked him for the card," said Megan. "He said he didn't have it. I thought he didn't care!"

"I actually had thrown away the card because I'd already bought the ring, so that was true," Eli joked. "I like to do things right if I can!"

"It was great. I loved it!" Megan laughed.

— The Vincents

The Double Cross

Matt plays in a hockey league and one weekend he was away in New York for a tournament. During his drive home he called Kayla to let her know that his car was making funny noises. A little after midnight, he called again to say he'd just gotten back to the area but had a flat tire and needed a ride the rest of the way home. Kayla had to work the next morning, but she got out of bed to pick him up. After she'd been out driving for a few minutes, she called him on his cell phone with a question.

"He said to just go home, he'd take care of it," said Kayla. When she got home, a surprise awaited her. "I came up the stairs and there was a letter on the door and it just basically said, 'I love you and we spend a lot of time together.' I opened the door to our apartment and there was music playing and this candle-lit path throughout the house. It was sweet. There were little notes throughout the path of memories we'd had and things we'd done together."



"When I got to the end ... he was behind me on one knee."

They'd been dating for several years, so Kayla had been expecting a proposal at some point, but she was completely taken by surprise that night!

— The Links

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In The Running

Jessie and Brian had been dating for five years, so Jessie figured a proposal would come at some point soon. But she was also taken by surprise the day Brian popped the question.

"I've always been a runner, so he took up running," she said. "I had done marathons and he decided he was going to do one. We ran one together in November and he asked me at the finish line if I would marry him. He had the ring tied on the string on his shorts. He had it on him the whole time! We were running the race and he was just so happy and he was waving to everybody and smiling the whole time. I was getting irritated because it's a hard race and he shouldn't have been so happy! But now I know why."

Jessie was so surprised that she forgot to answer.



"I think I said, 'Are you kidding me?' And then I said yes!"

— The Toneys

Prelude To A Ring

Gentlemen, if you want some pointers on crafting the perfect proposal for your girlfriend, look no further than Roger Bernier's tactic. "I did some research," Roger said.

"I had her friends ask her what she thought was the best romantic proposal moment."

"I didn't know that he had scammed me!" said Paula. "We were out for a girls' night with my friends. And somebody just brought up the topic - if you were ever to get married, how would you like to get proposed to? So we had a whole big discussion. I had no idea that he had set it up."

On New Year's Eve 2010, Roger proposed to Paula in front of St. Johnsbury Academy under the First Night fireworks.

"That's what [the women] came up with," Roger said. "So everybody knew except her!"



"Five minutes after he proposed, everybody was calling me," laughed Paula.

Under the fireworks as the snow fell around them, Roger and Paula had their first New Year's kiss as an engaged couple.

— The Berniers

A New Memory

When he was 14, Matt Charest was in a terrible car accident that left him in a wheelchair. When he decided to propose to Cindy, he used the opportunity to help heal some old wounds.

"It was Aug. 9, which was the date that I had my car accident."

"I wanted to make it a better day than previous, so I asked her to marry me."

Cindy didn't make him wait for an answer - she immediately said yes.

— The Charests



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A WINNING COUPLE

Congratulations to Nick and Elise St. Cyr of Northumberland, N.H., the winners of our cover photo contest!

They both grew up in the same area (he in Groveton, she in Lancaster), but the age difference meant they didn't know each other as kids. It was as adults that they found each other through friends. "We'd been together for six years when we got married," Elise said.

"We've got a lot of the same friends, so we do a lot of stuff with all of them together," Nick said. In fact, their friends are such a great support network that Elise and Nick's relationship began a string of domino relationships. "Now most of his guy friends and my girl friends are dating!" Elise said. "It started with us, it was weird."

Elise had been fantasizing about her dream wedding for years. "I knew what it was going to look like in my head," she said.

In the end, she was able to get most of what she wanted for a good price.

"I wanted a classy wedding, but I didn't want to spend millions of dollars."

She found a lot of inspiration on Pinterest and then set out to do things on her own. She created and printed her own invitations and made her own centerpieces. "I got a lot of my decorations after Christmas the year before because our colors were silver and purple."

Nick was impressed with the way Elise put it all together. "She spent a lot of time," he said. "She's good at getting details and planning."

With rain clouds in the sky that morning, they were nervous it would ruin the day, but the rain held off until after the ceremony. That's when things got interesting. The bridal party was headed to an estate in Lancaster for additional photos, "but it's on a back road and a tree fell down and the limo had to back out of the road about a half mile to the main highway!"

Although Elise is disappointed that those pictures didn't happen, the rain did provide one of the most memorable moments of the day — while she and Nick were dancing at the reception, there was an enormous double rainbow out the windows.

One cost-cutting measure that she wishes she'd done differently was the cake. "At everyone else's wedding, the cake was never important to me," she said. She decided that would be a good place to save a few hundred dollars. Sadly, the cake collapsed a bit before it was presented at the reception. "When I saw mine, I was like I should have spent the money."

In the end though, their advice for those who are now planning their weddings is simple: "Marry the one you love!"



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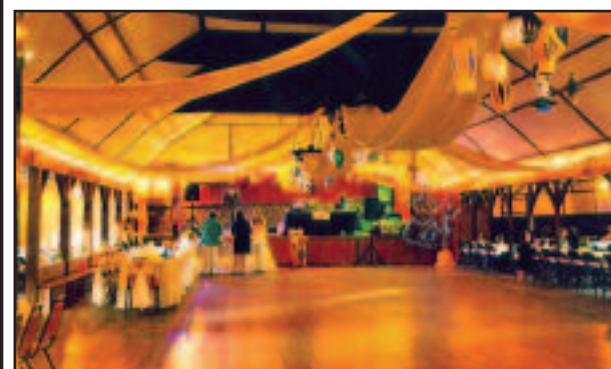


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FOR THE Do It Yourself CROWD ...

The Woods

"For my guest book I wanted a drawing of a tree with thumb prints. My sister is an artist, so she drew that." She also made boutonnieres for the wedding party, using felted wool from her mother's farm. "She's a shepherd and she spins and weaves, so she helped me figure that one out."

Kate recommends hitting up crafty friends to help. "It's all who you know and feeding off all your creative friends...and then thanking them so much!" she said.



Whether it's because there's so much inspiration to be found on Pinterest, or because couples want to save money, there was a huge trend toward "Do It Yourself" amongst our couples. Some couples did almost everything themselves. Other couples chose a few details to focus on. To provide you with some DIY inspiration, here's a sampling of how they indulged their inner Martha Stewart.

The Howards



"I really wanted navy chevron napkins, so I bought the fabric and my mom cut and did them. She was a big help!" Ariana said. "I didn't want to go broke for a wedding, but I also wanted it to be everything I'd pictured."

The Toney's



Jessie is a florist by trade, so she knew she'd be focused on flowers as a main element of her wedding. Knowing so much about it actually made it a bit of a challenge. "It was a little more difficult because I know so much about it and I've seen so many things. And you know I love flowers, so I had to sort of narrow it down and that was a little challenging for me. That was the last thing — the last big thing that I got nailed down. I knew I wanted it to be beautiful, but it was hard. I went with some flowers that were my favorites. I was able to grow a lot of them."

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The Vincents

"I did a lot of it myself," said Megan. "I started early. I consider myself sort of crafty. We had somebody give us a bunch of burlap and I made all the boutonnieres. I did a lot of it myself and had help from my mom, my sister and Eli's sister."



The Berniers

Roger also made an arbor for his special day with Paula. "I built it because [Paula] said she wanted an arbor. My brother-in-law and I cut down the birch and put the flowers all around it." The arbor now graces the entrance to their home.

Paula added that they were able to keep the food simple as well. "We didn't really have a caterer. We had people bring in finger foods. Everybody helped. We didn't have a photographer. We had everybody take pictures with digital cameras."



The Broomes

Heidi is one of several brides who made bouquets and boutonnieres for her bridal party. "[George's] daughter stood up with us and I made a bouquet for me and her. And I made artificial hibiscus boutonnieres for everybody, all the guys. And then all the ladies had just artificial hibiscus and a lace tie around their wrist, so all the family felt part of it, too."

George added, "They looked real, too. She did a good job. A lot of tedious work. Not hard work, but time-consuming. And she did a lot of work over the year."



The Charests



"We had a candy buffet at the wedding. My mother-in-law is really Martha Stewart-y," Cindy said. "She made half of the candies and she makes filled chocolates. We also went on discount websites, like Oriental Trading, that have a lot of good deals."

The Leonards

"We did everything ourselves," Caitlin said. "My mother-in-law helped with the flowers and worked with Artistic Gardens. Other than that, we did everything. The place settings were all wine corks that we had amassed over the years in my family. We cut those down to fit. All the decorations, all the signage, we did the program — we did everything."



THE AFTERMATH

After spending months - or even a year - focused on preparations for a single day, don't be surprised if there's an emotional hangover the day after the main event.

Caitlin Leonard said that she was pretty fixated on making her perfect wedding. "Jay would say it was six months of hell because I was working on it every night," she said, probably only half joking.

So what did she do the day after? "I picked up Rosetta Stone and tried to learn a language, went back to the gym, picked up another Zumba class. I tried to fill the holes, but I had so much extra time. It felt great, but there was a little bit of let down. Overall it felt really good and I was happy to have my life back in a happy way, being married to this man."

Megan Vincent felt the same way. "It was very strange to have that free time. I didn't know what to do with myself!"

Her new hubby, Eli, was happy when she fell asleep in the car ride on their way to Maine for their honeymoon. "She deserved to feel relaxed."



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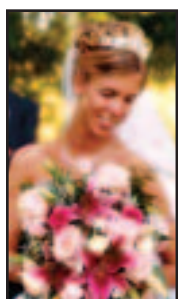
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Cindy Charest

"I tried on one of every style dress that I could. It was actually the last dress that I tried on, and it was the exact opposite of what I thought. It was kind of a princess-y dress. It's not what I wanted at all because that's not me, but I put it on and it was the one. I put it on just to say I'd put a princess dress on, and it was the one!"



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"I paid \$700 for my dress, and I found it out in California. I went out to another friend's wedding and there were a lot more out there for plus size girls. As a curvy girl it was hard to find things to try on out here."

Kayla Link



"I'm not the kind of person that's like, 'Oh my god, this is the one!' It took me a really long time. ... I think it's because when I went in to looking for a dress, I had pictured that it would be lace and form-fitted. When I actually started trying them on they looked terrible on me. I tried something totally different and that's what I ended up loving — it had nothing that I wanted originally."

THE PERFECT DRESS

Perhaps nothing figures more prominently in little girls' dreams of their wedding than the wedding dress.

Some of our brides told us their stories about finding the perfect dress... often not at all the one that they were anticipating!



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Kate Wood

"I found a dress I absolutely loved, but I forced myself to go somewhere else and find a cheaper dress. I fell in love with [another dress] and it was off the rack so it just had to be altered. It was forcing myself to realize that it was an important one day event, but you have to think first and not impulse buy!"

Megan Vincent

"As I was pulling it up from my ankles, I knew that it was the one. I loved that it was vintage-y. I'm very simple so I expected to choose a much more simple dress, but it wasn't simple at all. I loved the old-fashioned lace. We put cap sleeves on it. I wanted to be dassy. It was a little tight in the mid-section and I felt a little sexy!"



Roger chose Paula's dress when they went shopping together. "It was the first one she tried on that day and I said, 'That's the one.' And of course she had to try on I don't know how many more - like seven more - at two different places, and we ended up going back to get that one."

Paula Bernier



Jessie Toney

"Shopping is not something that I enjoy that much. I wasn't really looking forward to it, but I took my maid of honor and I took my mom and Brian's mom as well. ... I saw one on the rack and wasn't going to try it, but I put it on and I knew that it was the one. It was the only one left and it was going out of stock, so I had to buy a size that was way too big for me, but I had a seamstress fit it for me and it was perfect."



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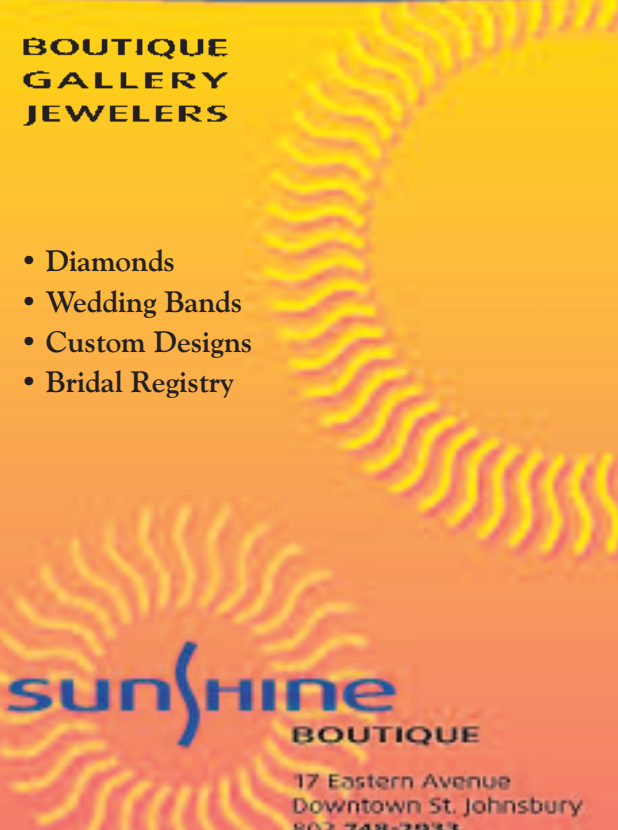
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How will I know when I've found *The One*?" It's a question that every teenage girl - and probably most teenage boys - has asked at some point. Some of our newlyweds weighed in on how they knew.



The Vincents

Megan Vincent

"We have a lot of the same values. I tried my name out with his last name a few times. I just knew. I don't know how to explain that feeling. ... He's very considerate, very thoughtful. He never starts eating dinner until I start, he always waits. I really appreciate those little things. I think that's hard to find."

Eli Vincent

"Today's values aren't quite what they used to be and people aren't always as classy. She just was everything you could imagine. Just the way she was with people, her generosity, so sweet. I knew I couldn't let her go."



The Broomes

George Broome

"I don't think it's any one thing. I guess we both like a lot of the same things, we're interested the same. We do a lot of stuff together. The only thing she doesn't do is hunt!"

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The Leonards

Caitlin Leonard
"He accepted me for me and he's a family man," Caitlin said. "He loves the outdoors, the way he enjoyed family and growing up in the Northeast Kingdom, all his values. That's something I was looking for and I finally just realized that this was a good one!"
There was one indicator that went even deeper than the rest though. "The way he treated his two black labs was my first inclination that he would be the best husband and father ever. That was the first sign to me – how he treated his dogs."



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The Charests

Cindy Charest
"After a month of dating I told my mom that I would marry him. I just knew. He's really strong and inspiring."
Matt Charest
"From the way that she made me feel when I was with her. She's just so sweet and always giving and always willing to put other people's needs ahead of hers. It's just the selflessness that she does it with."



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Apparel									Ceremony			
Bridal Gown				Ring pillow				Site fee				
Veil/headpiece				Pew decorations				Officiant fee				
Alterations				Table decorations				Other				
Bride's shoes				Reception decorations				Total Ceremony:				
Bride's hosiery				Lighting				Transportation				
Bride's garter				Candles				Limousine rental				
Jewelry				Balloons				Out-of-towners				
Groom's suit				Other				Parking				
Groom's shoes				Total Flowers:				Other				
Engagement rings								Total Transport:				
Wedding rings				Reception				Photography/ Videography				
Other				Venue rental				Formals				
Total Apparel:				Table/chair rental				Candids				
Flowers/Decorations				Food				Extra prints				
Bridal bouquet				Drinks				Photo albums				
Bridesmaid bouquets				Linens				Videography				
Boutonnieres				Cake				Other				
Corsages				Favors				Total Photography:				
Ceremony flowers				Staff and gratuities								
Flower girl buds				Other								
				Total Reception:								

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Cocktail-hour music			
Reception music			
Sound system rental			
Dance floor rental			
Other			
Total Music:			
Favors & Gifts			
Hotel gift bags			
Attendant gifts			
Bride/groom gifts			
Gifts for parents			
Gifts for readers, etc.			
Other			
Total Gifts:			
Stationery			
Save the date cards			
Invitations/RSVPs			
Programs			
Seating place cards			
Menu cards			



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Stationery			
Thank you notes			
Postage			
Guest book			
Reception napkins			
Calligraphy			
Other			
Total Stationery:			
Other Expenses			
Wedding coordinator			
Rehearsal dinner			
Engagement party			
Showers			
Salon appointments			
Stag/hen parties			
Brunch			
Hotel rooms			
Other			
Total Other :			
GRAND TOTAL:			



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PRO TIPS FOR PERFECT PICS

Meg Hamilton of Rodeo & Co. Photography in Landaff, N.H., is a sought-after wedding photographer throughout New England and beyond.

Even more so now that her pictures landed in the pages of the Martha Stewart Weddings spring 2012 magazine. "That was amazing!" she said recently.

With that pedigree, Meg was the obvious choice to give some tips about how to get the best photos on your wedding day. Here is some of the wisdom that she shared:

Choose the right photographer for your wedding -

"The number one thing is to make sure you like the photographer's style that they're showcasing on their website. If not, you probably won't be happy with your photos. A lot of time people might go for budget or because their sister used them, but that might not be the best fit at all."

Want a good deal? Think winter - "Winter weddings are becoming more and more popular, which is great for me. Generally speaking, the bulk of my business is from May to end of October, and then it really dwindles down. Most venues are a good discount too."

Get to know each other - "I think the number one thing is to meet with your photographer before the wedding. Don't wait to meet on the wedding day." Hamilton said that she usually does engagement photos for the couple as well, which gives them all a chance to get to know each other.



Meg Hamilton of Rodeo & Co. was the photographer for two of our featured couples: Kate & Chris Wood (above and right center) and Ariana & Trevor Howard (near right and far right).

Make a time line - Make a schedule in advance and stick to it so that you know you'll get exactly what you want when you want it. "Find a designated person — either a wedding coordinator, or a person close to you — who can make sure the time line is stuck to. ... It's [the couple's] wedding day and they get so caught up in the excitement of the day, before they think of if the sun is gone. They're not going to get photos they want."

Trust the professionals - "You've hired a photographer because you like their style. On the day you need to trust them." It can be easy to be swayed by a family member who wants a particular picture taken in a particular place, but your photographer will know whether the lighting and background make for a great photo or not. "Listen to your photographer on your wedding day, not your Uncle Joe who happens to have a camera," Meg joked.

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Be aware of clutter - "Brides will have an idea for a beautiful picture of getting ready and their mom lacing them up into their gown, but they'll have bags from Wal-Mart and clutter all around. I tell brides to have one of their friends spend a few minutes picking up."

Think about the story you want your photos to tell - "I have brides



shoot me an email or write me a note of the important mementos of the day that I might not know — they're wearing their grandmother's pearls, their something borrowed, something blue. It helps me to tell the story better. It's stuff I won't know if they don't tell me." She also suggests bringing a copy of the invitation and she shoots a picture with their flowers. "They usually take a lot of time and money on their invitations, so it's nice to incorporate that into the day."

It's okay to buck tradition - "Some couples are opting to do a 'first look' session for a half hour before the ceremony. Especially for the fall weddings where we lose the sun early that works well. I still have them do something special like him facing away and her coming up to tap him on the shoulder, so it's still special when he sees her for the first time."

Let the kids be kids - "As a mother, I have a high tolerance for little kids," Meg said. "I just let them do their thing and if they're not in the mood for a photo, then I don't push it to have them there. I'll wait for them to be happy and in their own moment and I'll get a more candid portrait of them. I would never hold up a portrait session because a 2-year-old is having a tantrum."



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THE SUPER CASUAL WEDDING

We're simple people," Heidi Broome said by way of introduction. "We didn't want the big hubbub."

She and her new husband George chose a super-casual wedding on the dock of their camp at Island Pond. It's a second marriage for both, so they'd each already done the big white affair. This time they wanted the focus to be on fun and family. "Everybody can relax," said George. "It's more or less like a big family reunion ... get everybody together to have a good time, and that's what our goal was."

The Broomes live in St. Johnsbury and spend a lot of their leisure time at Island Pond. "We save all year to be at Island Pond," Heidi said. "We decided that we wanted to get married on our dock there."

The dock could only accommodate a small number of people - essentially the wedding party and a few family members - so some people pulled their boats up the dock to create a floating seating area. Others waited on the beach area at the opposite side of the pond to begin the celebration.

Everybody pitched in to make the day a special one - Heidi's father performed the ceremony; the campground manager provided day passes for guests; their campground friends hosted the reception, bringing in Port-A-Potties and other necessities; George's cousin is in a band that provided the music; a friend brought meat platters; another friend brought a meat



Heidi's father marries the couple with family looking on.

smoker; family members brought bowls of pasta salad, and other people brought pies (in place of the traditional wedding cake); other friends pitched in beer kegs and wine.

"People showed up early the day before and helped set up, and then they stayed after and helped pick up," said Heidi. "It was an all-day affair, from daylight on."

The bride wore a sundress ("I bought it two years before that, hoping that I'd have a chance to wear it," she said) and the groom wore board shorts. "All the guys in the family wore casual white shirts and board shorts, and the females could wear whatever they wanted as long as it was beach attire. ... Nice looking, but casual, so you didn't feel like you're standing there in this dress that can't have anything happen to it."

Even their invitations carried the theme - rather than the formal save-the-date cards and invitations that most people expect, Heidi made a tri-



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Above: Friends and family watch the ceremony from boats surrounding the dock. Afterward, they crossed the lake to the beach for the reception.
Below: Heidi's father walks her down to the dock for the ceremony.

fold brochure with a beach theme and all the relevant information. "It was basically just saying ... the reception was casual, bring your bathing suits if you want to swim. Bring your shorts and a chair. If you don't feel like beer and wine and punch, then you can bring your own. It was all in the little brochure."

Both Heidi and George are very pleased with their choices because it was fun and relaxing - both for them and their guests. "I think it's something people will remember more than a conventional wedding," George said. "It seems like when you go to any wedding it's got that same routine. They all kind of blend together after you go to a few of them. This was something different. It was a lot of fun."

Heidi agreed. "We work very hard, but we also play very hard. We're simple people," she said. "We like to be around people and our friends and enjoying life in its simplicity. So I guess that's what our wedding was all about, was just the simplicity of life and being surrounded by your friends and family."



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OUR COUPLES SHARE LASTING MEMORIES

When you think back on a special day, it's unlikely that you'll remember every detail. Instead, we tend to remember snapshots and particular moments. Here are some of the moments that our couples remember most. Perhaps they will give you some inspiration for important things to focus on during your big day.



The Vincents

Megan: "I have a three year old daughter and she saw my sister, my maid of honor, straighten my train and then she was straightening it after that."

Eli: "Ever since we got engaged, I was just really ready to call her my wife. . . . Once he finally pronounced us, we were walking back, we kissed. We did it! Now let's move on and start our lives!"

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The Broomes



George: "Watching her dancing with her brother (above). She misses him a lot."

Heidi: "I think coming down the bank and seeing that picture. It was for real because all of our families were there. That's probably the most emotional part."

The Toney's



Jessie: "Our first dance. We chose a very unique song and it was humorous and it kind of had everybody laughing but it just fit us perfectly. 'In Spite Of Ourselves,' it's not too sappy, it just fit us perfectly."



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The Charests

Matt: "I think it was our first dance, that was probably the best moment. I was just focused on Cindy and it didn't seem to matter who was in the room. We were just locked in each other's eyes. It was a beautiful moment."

Cindy: "Once I saw him in the church. I wasn't nervous at all. So that was a good moment. He cried like a little baby, so that made it even better!"

The Pikes

Ariel: "Probably walking out right after we got married. That was the best part, definitely. You just couldn't not smile. Everything is over, the nervous part was over, but it was so exciting!"



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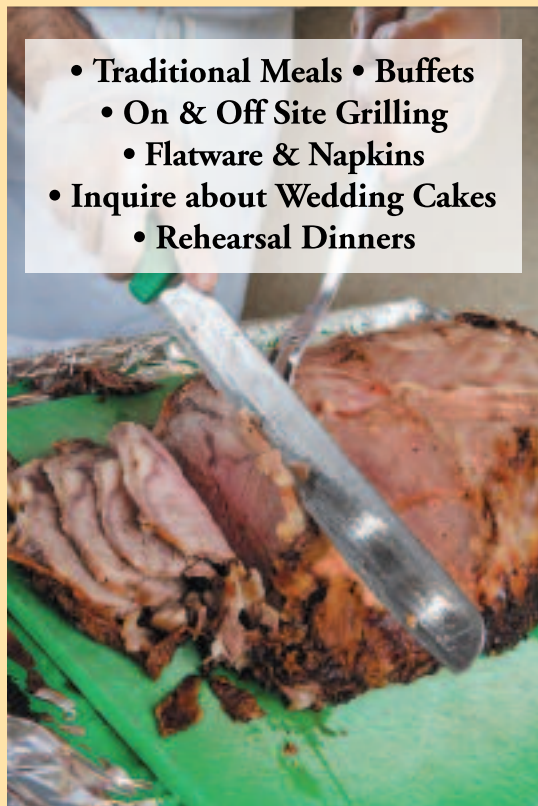
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CLEVER PHOTO IDEAS



The Pikes



Ariel and Jonathan Pike have a collection of fun photos with their wedding party that were a group effort.

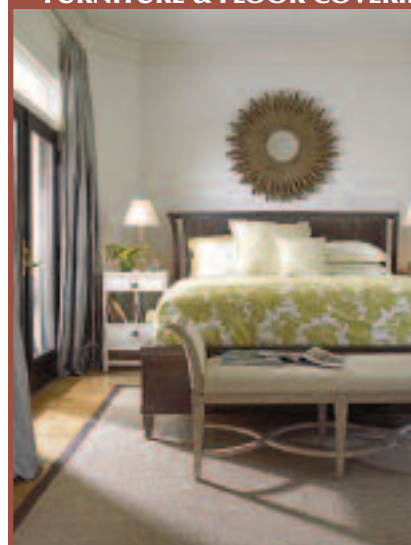
Ariel asked each of her bridesmaids to bring a clever photo idea with them. "We did all of them!" she said.

Editor's favorite: the top right picture where the girls and boys swapped jackets and flowers!

Below: Ariel and Jonathan's 18-month-old son Brayden was their ring bearer and he had a sweet ride for the day!



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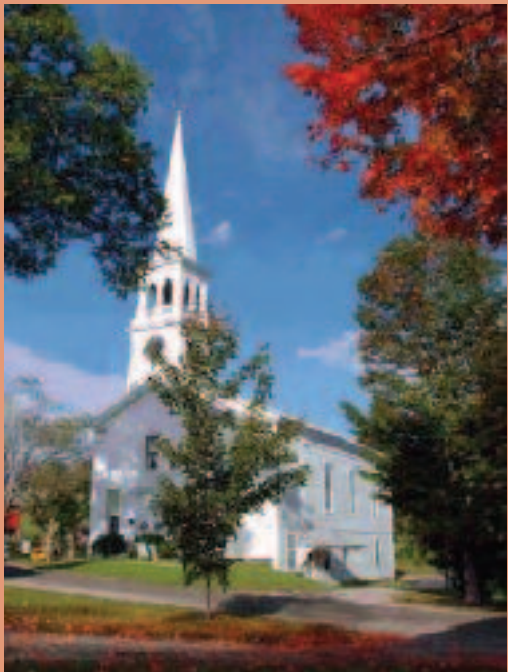
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GIVE IT A TOUCH OF CREATIVITY

Here are some fun things our couples did to put their unique stamp on the day. Use these as a springboard to your own innovation and creativity!



The Leonards

"We had old skis - antique skis - instead of a guest book," said Caitlin. "We found these old, really nice wooden skis at a craft fair. We had people sign the skis and now they hang over our fireplace." A magazine picture of skis over a fireplace gave Caitlin the idea; she and Jay figured out how to make it part of the wedding by getting the skis signed.



The Vincents

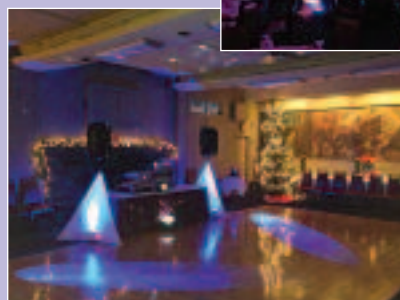
Eli and Megan are both very family oriented, and their wedding reflected that. "There were lots of kids. We had a basket with a football, candy bars, and a s'mores set up," said Megan. "I have a very strong urge for candy at most times of the day!" added Eli.

Instead of fancy glasses, they drank from mason jars with chalkboard paint on them so people could write their names on them.



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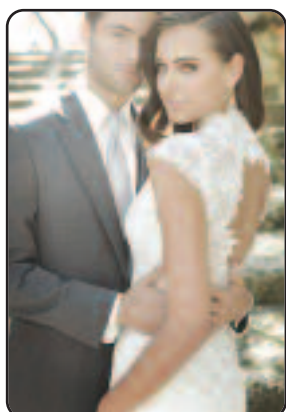
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The Broomes

Heidi and George decided on a guest book idea that went perfectly with their casual wedding. "We just had a white vinyl table cloth on a picnic table that everybody could sign," Heidi said. "We saved it and we actually used it the next year at camp as a tablecloth!"

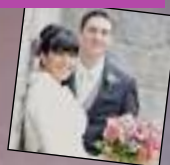


The Toney's

Jessie couldn't find the right dress for her bridesmaids, so instead of stressing over it, she took a different route. "I had a hard time finding bridesmaid dresses that all my girls would like and be comfortable in - my girls were very varied in body types - and I didn't want them spending too much money on them. I also had my heart set on a really pale green and couldn't find anything. I ended up picking out some really nice fabric at JoAnn's and some dress patterns. The girls each picked out a pattern that they wanted and I had the dresses made by a local seamstress. They all loved the dresses, could wear them again and the price was very reasonable. It was less than many of the ones we saw in the bridal shops. My co-worker made ties for the groomsmen out of the same fabric."



The Woods



Kate and Chris wanted to honor all of the family members who had walked down the aisle before them. "I did a whole area of our wedding that was dedicated to all of our family members who were married," said Kate. "We had all of their photos and a tag saying how long they'd been married." She also had the photographer get a shot of her grandparents holding their wedding photo from 64 years earlier.



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OUR COUPLES TURNED TO ONLINE HELPERS

The Internet provides some amazing creative and organizational tools. Here are some of the ones our couples found useful:

TheKnot.com

Their October 2011 wedding was a few months early for Caitlin Falzone to use Pinterest. "It hadn't taken off yet when I was planning. That would have been amazing to have!" However she did spend a lot of time at TheKnot.com. "I used it a lot," she said. "They had a lot of tools on there that were helpful."

Pinterest.com

Kate Wood became a fan and took lots of decorating inspiration from the site. "I fell in love with Pinterest!" she said. "A lot of planning came from it." She even said that during the planning stages, "Online was my best friend."

Kate's approach was to look for things that appealed to her - like a ribbon backdrop for the ceremonial arch they were married under - and repin it. Then she'd wait to see which of the ideas were popular and got repinned. That helped her narrow down many ideas to the few that she used. "Part of my budget was doing a lot of do-it-yourself things," Kate said, so she had to plan her details carefully.

Jessie Toney is a florist by trade, so she spent a lot of time on Pinterest looking at flowers. "There's a lot of burlap and birch on there that we went with," she said. "We got lots of ideas on how to

decorate the tent." But, she warns, there are ideas available on everything from the dessert table to shoes. "There's so much on there! You spend a lot of time on there," she said as she started laughing. "It's helpful, but sometimes you can have too many ideas, so you kind of have to find something and stick to it."

Pinterest became popular at the tail end of planning for Kayla Link's wedding, but she was able to find one idea she really liked. "The s'mores bag was one thing - they actually had these cute tag sets that said 'Sending s'more love' with our names and the date."

Etsy.com

When she found something she really liked on Pinterest, Kate Wood first tried to do it herself. But if she couldn't, she turned to etsy.com. "Pretty much anything I didn't make myself, I got from etsy, because you're buying it directly from the person," she said. "I used to work in retail, so I know it's jacked up [in a store]. If you go straight to the source, you'll be fine."

HoneyFund.com

Kate and Chris Wood knew they wanted to honeymoon in the United Kingdom, but between purchasing a house and planning a wedding, all of which they paid for themselves, there wasn't a lot of wiggle room for travel.

They found the site HoneyFund.com, which made it easy to set up a honeymoon fund where guests contribute to the honeymoon of their dreams. It's set up like a wedding registry with items at varying costs - you can fund a champagne toast, a night at a hotel, or a certain number of airline miles.

"Some people actually used the HoneyFund site - it just gives the guest a coupon to print out to go with their check they placed in their card for us - and some just gave us money knowing that is what we would

Above: Kate and Chris Wood beam during their honeymoon in the United Kingdom, which was paid for using HoneyFund.com.



Matt Charest's uncle Skypes their wedding ceremony and reception for family in Florida who couldn't attend.

put it towards," Kate explained.

They took their dream honeymoon last summer, three months after their wedding.

Skype.com

There's an old saying that when Muhammad can't come to the mountain, the mountain comes to Muhammad. That was the case for Matt Charest's grandparents, who live in Florida and were unable to make the trip.

"Matt's uncle Skyped the whole wedding, the first dance, the toast," said Cindy. "We got to talk to them at the reception through Skype. They got dressed up down there and everything!"

If you have loved ones who can't make it to your ceremony or reception, consider this option. All you need is a webcam and a strong Wi-Fi connection to make it work.

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TALE OF A MULTI-CULTURAL WEDDING

When Leona Siddiqui says, "I never had any sense of religious intolerance," she means it in a way that most of us can only imagine.

Leona, 27, grew up in Greensboro as the daughter of a Christian mother and Jewish father. Although her mother, Judy Carpenter, says she nor Leona's father were very religious, Leona learned about both traditions. "We brought our kids up to understand both religions," Judy said. "We went with each family for their rituals."

That background eventually inspired Leona to go on her own religious quest. She converted to Islam several years ago. "Converting wasn't a huge identity crisis for me," Leona said. "I was looking for something that would work and that I would believe in." She eventually found her home in the Sufi community. "Sufism is the practice of spirituality within the Muslim community," she explained. "It's developed as a spirituality that works within a family life."

In April 2012, through a network of her Sufi friends, Leona met Hasan, 28. She was living in Washington, DC, at the time and Hasan was living in Michigan. After talking on the phone for a month, they met at the end of May. Things happened fast from there. Leona and Hasan were married this fall. First they had a large wedding at their home mosque in Michigan. They came home to Vermont for a more eclectic gathering in October.

In keeping with all of the traditions that they brought with them, their Vermont wedding was "a potluck of traditions," Leona said.

The Siddiquis



"An Islamic wedding is very simple," Leona said. "There's certain things that have to be said and a witness has to be present from each family."

To satisfy Islamic tradition, both Leona and Hasan had their heads covered. Leona had a woman from the Muslim community in Burlington do traditional Henna on her hands.

They also knelt for the ceremony. "In Sufism it's a sign of humility in front of God," Leona said. "We're used to sitting and kneeling on the floor when we pray." In a mosque, the attendees would also sit and kneel on the floor. In order to allow the guests at their Vermont wedding to sit in chairs, Leona's father borrowed a large platform from the local school and another friend lent a large Tibetan tapestry that they laid over it. "We were able to kneel and still be high enough for people to see us with everyone in chairs."

From the more traditional American wedding, she walked down the aisle with her father, who gave her away. "We did that for the sake of our guests and our families," Leona said. "That's not an Islamic tradition really." They also had flower girls and Leona's grandmother arranged the seating in the American style, "so everyone was in the proper place."

The wedding was held at the Green Mountain Monastery by two of Leona's friends who are Catholic nuns. "They were really helpful," she said. "We used dishes from two different churches!"

During the reception, somebody sang "Mazel Tov" for them and someone else sang some old Southern Baptist hymns. At the end of the evening they lit and sent off Japanese lanterns.

Their guests came in from places as far-flung as Asia, Africa, India, Canada and Europe. And there was a large contingent of native Vermonters. It is this part of the story where the "potluck" wedding shows its colors most vividly.

"The people of Vermont have been so open-armed and happy with their hosting," said Hasan. "It's rare to have such open arms to new cultures and experiences. The coolest thing that everybody said about the wedding was that there were so many people from so many walks of life. . . . It was so integrated and everybody felt like it was just one big family."

"Having an Islamic ceremony like that but here in Vermont with our family, it was a joyful and warm way for me to share the tradition that's important to me with my family here," said Leona. "They appreciated the beauty of it, even though it's really different. That's why I wanted to do it here in Vermont, because I wanted to share that with my community."

"The crazy and really special part of it was in addition to all my local friends, our Sufi community," she continued. "It was very special to us to see all these turbans and beards wandering around with the Vermonters."



Leona and Hasan Siddiqui are bound in marriage during a ceremony that honored multiple cultural and religious heritages.



Leona wears traditional garb and henna during her wedding ceremony. Here she is holding her ring-bearer.

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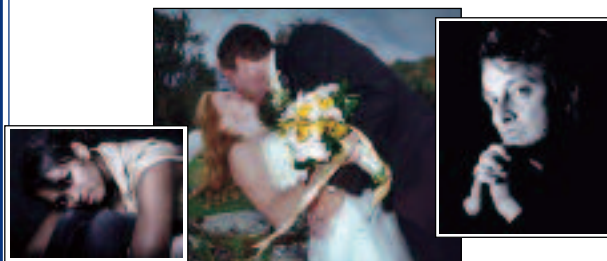
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The show will be at the Comfort Inn & Suites in St. Johnsbury on Feb. 17 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Cross plans to feature vendors across all the important wedding categories: photographers, caterers, salons, rentals, florists, venues, dresses, music, cakes and more.

"Hopefully we'll have some live musicians," she said, explaining that she's hoping for a sax-

ophonist, harpist, pianist and bagpiper, each of whom will play for about a half hour.

Cross decided to organize this show recently when she opened a new division of her store focusing on bridal and formalwear. "I realized that there hasn't been anything here to showcase the bridal professionals in the area," said Cross. "Hopefully if we can pool our resources, we can bring it up."

For instance, she said, it can be hard to know where to find someone who makes beautiful cakes in the area. "They're here but they need to be front and center to get their business going."

Cross plans to have some roving models to showcase dresses, hair and makeup. Caterers will offer food tastings. Florists will show examples of centerpieces, bouquets and boutonnieres ("Artistic Gardens is going to be in it, even after the fire," said Cross), and there will be examples of table settings from Abbott Rentals.

There will also be door prizes, including high-value gift certificates from venues like Jeudevine Falls and Stepping Stone Spa.

BEST OF THE REST

Here are a few more of our favorite entries from the cover photo contest:

1. Jennifer & Scott Moyer, photographer - Diane Brown
2. Seth & Whitney Brown, photographer - Jordan Royer
3. Luke & Kristi Driscoll, photographer - Jackie Nagle
4. Jacqueline & Donald Beer Jr., photographer - Kendra Noys



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Bridget's Beauty Boutique 30

Burke Mountain 7

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Caledonia County Fairgrounds 19

Capitol Plaza 31

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Daisy Darling, photographer - Heidi Walsh-Kirk

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