

January 2021 A Special Supplement to **STAR BEACON**

I DO



ODH's COVID-19 guidelines must be followed

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

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Weddings are allowed to move forward under the rules imposed by the Ohio Department of Health, but there are some restrictions that need to be followed.

In a health order issued on Nov. 16, ODH outlined the requirements that weddings have to follow.

"Despite the health order that limited mass gatherings to 10 people that was signed in April remaining in effect, we have seen rampant spread of the virus as a result of banquets, wedding receptions, and social gatherings following funerals," Governor Mike DeWine said in a

press release announcing the order. "We have seen great tragedy associated with such events. It's not the ceremonies causing the problem. It's the party afterward."

The order requires people to be wearing masks at all times when not actively eating or drinking at receptions, seating no more than 10 people at a table and requiring those people to be from the same household, requiring guests to be served at their seats, and banning congregating in common areas and dancing, according to the order.

Traditional activities like cutting the cake, the couple's first dance and throwing the bouquet are still allowed,

according to the order.

The order also continued restrictions from earlier in the year, which set a maximum of 300 people at any banquet hall event, and require six feet of social distancing.

Ashtabula County Health Commissioner Ray Saporito warned against holding large

"Weddings and funerals, like any close gathering, present COVID-19 risk," Saporito said. There have been at least two outbreaks of COVID-19 in Ashtabula County that were linked to weddings, he said.

Saporito suggested having small ceremonies, then hosting wedding receptions in the summer, when the

receptions could be held outside. Those receptions should still follow the rules and requirements for wedding receptions, he said.

"Nobody wants to have an outbreak associated with their wedding," Saporito said.

There appears to be a newly discovered strain of COVID-19 that is easier to transmit, Saporito said.

Crowded conditions promote the spread of viruses, he said.

"I would say delaying your reception to the warmer months where you can do most of this outside, along with the fact we'll be getting people more vaccinated, that should help too," Saporito said.

'I would say delaying your reception to the warmer months where you can do most of this outside, along with the fact we'll be getting more people vaccinated, that should help, too.'

Ray Saporito
Ashtabula County Health
Commissioner

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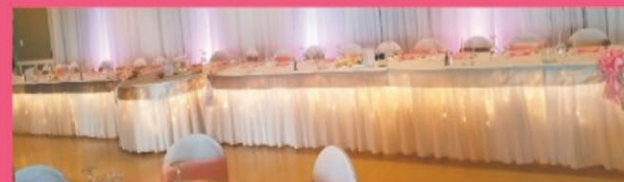


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How to host a socially distant wedding

It's likely that few people heard of "social distancing" prior to 2020. That changed as the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spread rapidly across the globe and the world found itself in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines social distancing as keeping a safe distance of at least six feet between yourself and other people who are not from your household. Public health officials continue to champion social distancing while acknowledging the fatigue that many people have experienced as the pandemic stretched on for months. Though much of the world hit the proverbial pause button, life went on during the pandemic. Perhaps nowhere was that more evident than at the altar, where many couples still tied the knot, albeit in scaled back ceremonies that adhered to social distancing guidelines in their communities.

Engaged couples who have yet to tie the knot no doubt recognize that planning a socially distant wedding will not be the same as organizing more traditional ceremonies and recep-

tions. While planning a socially distant wedding presents some unique challenges, couples can take certain steps to ensure their big day is memorable and safe.

SPREAD THE SOCIALLY DISTANT WORD

Let guests know what they're in for should they decide to take part in the festivities. Many people have strictly followed social distancing guidelines, while others have been reluctant to do so. Couples intent on keeping themselves and their guests safe from COVID-19 should emphasize that their weddings will be socially distant affairs so there's no confusion come the big day.

STREAM THE WEDDING ONLINE

Stream the wedding online for those guests who won't be in attendance. By the end of 2020, millions of people had already "attended" weddings via platforms like Zoom, so loved ones may be experienced virtual guests by the time couples walk down the aisle in 2021. Couples who may need some help planning virtual

affairs can visit the virtual wedding coordinators at Wedfuly.com, who recently partnered with Zoom to help couples bring their ceremonies online.

PARE DOWN THE IN-PERSON GUEST LIST

Couples who planned large weddings prior to the pandemic can still invite all of their loved ones to witness the festivities online, but pare down the in-person guest list to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Limit in-person guests to immediate family and those people who are part of your social distancing bubble.

PLAN A PARTY FOR DOWN THE ROAD

Couples can still celebrate their nuptials with family and friends down the road. Plan a post-pandemic reception and let guests know you will fill them in on the details once social distancing restrictions have been lifted.

Socially distant weddings may require couples to take some unusual steps as they try to tie the knot while keeping themselves and their loved ones safe.



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Plenty of venues remain available

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

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Hosting a wedding has gotten even more complicated due to COVID-19, but area venues have made changes to adapt to the pandemic.

The Lodge at Geneva-on-the-Lake was temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Some wedding parties chose to reschedule

their events to later in 2020, or into 2021, said Daisy Hall, Director of Sales and Marketing for the Lodge. Around 40 percent of weddings had their dates changed, she said.

Hall said that the Lodge has reduced occupancy for weddings, in order to comply with COVID-19 restrictions. The lodge can currently support around 190 guests safely, Hall said.

The Lodge has added

sanitation stations and has implemented a comprehensive mask policy for employees, Hall said. Seats for guests have been spread out for wedding ceremonies, Hall said. Staff members at the Lodge continually wear masks, and guests are required to wear masks when they are not seated and actively eating, she said.

Some brides have changed their wedding plans based on the COVID-19 outbreak, Hall said. Some weddings were sched-



SUBMITTED BY THE LODGE AT GENEVA-ON-THE-LAKE

The Lodge has options for both indoor and outdoor receptions. Tables have been spaced six feet apart to comply with COVID-19 social distancing rules.

uled for the morning, followed by a brunch, she said.

"So they're just doing

kind of immediate family, and doing an earlier wedding and then having brunch afterward,"

she said.

Others groups have

SEE **VENUES**, 5



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VENUES: Local sites still able to host weddings despite pandemic

FROM PAGE 4

booked two nights at the hotel, instead of the usual one, Hall said.

“What we’re seeing is that a lot of weddings are holding rooms the night before and the night of, so they’ve got more time to kind of do everything they want to do in Geneva-on-the-Lake,” she said.

The Lodge has seen a significant uptick in wedding registrations in the last month, and there have been a number of registrations made into 2022, she said.

Hall said that the Lodge’s parent company, Delaware North, had procedures in place for reopening, which were helpful.

“I think changing your business at any time is challenging,” Hall said. “During COVID, of course, we had to learn new ways to reach the public,

‘What we’re seeing is that a lot of weddings are holding rooms the night before and the night of, so they’ve got more time to do everything they want to do in Geneva-on-the-Lake.’

Daisy Hall
Director of Sales and Marketing at The Lodge at Geneva-on-the-Lake

to advertise, but then once people realized we were in a wide open space, and you could go outdoors into the park, or have your event outdoors, it was a really popular choice for people.”

Robert Dilly, owner of Norman-D Banquet Center, said the hall lost 37 events in 2020

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “2020 was disastrous for most people in this industry, but the bookings for [2021] are promising,” Dilly said.

Banquet halls follow the same rules as restaurants, Dilly said. Capacity has also decreased at Norman-D, which allowed them to space tables out further to comply with distancing requirements, Dilly said.

Norman-D has always had employees serve guests at the buffet, which is a requirement of the COVID-19 protocols, Dilly said. “We felt it was classier for weddings,” he said.

Dilly said that there are already events booked in 2022.

“We’re very fortunate the community supported us, and feel honored when we get chosen to be part of the bride’s special day,” Dilly said.



SUBMITTED BY THE LODGE AT GENEVA-ON-THE-LAKE

The Lodge has an outdoor venue for weddings. Seats for attendees are socially distanced, as an additional layer of safety.



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Features to seek in an outdoor wedding venue

Couples will remember their wedding day for the rest of their lives. The day a couple says "I do" is often the culmination of months of planning, and much of those efforts are dedicated to creating a special ceremony that will create cherished memories.

The choice of venue is a significant decision, and today's couples have more options regarding where to tie the knot than ever before. Many couples on the cusp of getting hitched are looking to do so in the great outdoors.

Nature took center stage at weddings in 2020, as many couples moved their ceremonies outdoors to adhere to government guidelines issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Couples considering outdoor venues for their weddings can look for certain features that can make the big day as special as it is safe.

BACKDROP

An awe-inspiring backdrop, whether it's the natural beauty of a mountaintop or a beach with the sound of ocean waves crashing into the shoreline, can make for great photos and a ceremony couples and their guests will never forget.

PLAN B

Couples may work hard to ensure everything goes off without a hitch, but ultimately the elements are in control during outdoor wedding ceremonies. So couples hoping to host an outdoor ceremony may want

to look for sites that have a readily accessible indoor option just in case Mother Nature is not cooperating. Many reception venues are capable of hosting indoor and outdoor ceremonies as well as dinners, so this might be the best option for couples who want to have outdoor weddings during times of the year when weather is typically inclement or unpredictable, such as winter, early spring or late fall.

LIGHTING

What's awe-inspiring in person may be hard to capture on film. Couples may want to bring their wedding photographers along as they search for outdoor ceremony sites. Professional photographers can help couples determine which sites will make for great photos and which ones might make it hard to capture the beauty of the site's surroundings.

ACCESSIBILITY

Couples will want to make sure all of their guests can be there to witness the ceremony. Before choosing an outdoor ceremony site, consider those guests who may have mobility issues, such as grandparents. A mid-day hike up a mountain might be doable for most guests, but it may exclude others from witnessing the ceremony. Try to find an outdoor ceremony site that's readily accessible to everyone. In addition, keep in mind that the more accessible a site is the easier it is to get away and get indoors if the weather takes a sud-

How to plan a ceremony

Months of planning is par for the course for couples about to tie the knot. Much of that planning concerns the reception, and rightfully so. Receptions last longer than ceremonies, and couples are often involved in every reception detail, from picking the appetizers to serve during cocktail hour to choosing the final song before everyone calls it a night. But it's equally important that couples devote considerable attention to their wedding ceremonies.

A wedding ceremony might not last long, but it is the most crucial component of a couple's wedding day and can even set the tone for the rest of the festivities. From choosing readings to honoring loved ones to immersing oneself in his or her faith, these tips can help couples plan their perfect ceremony.

- Give the ceremony equal footing with the reception. Spend time trying to put a personalized spin on the proceedings, whether that entails writing your own vows or choosing moving music that means something to you. When given ample attention, seemingly minor details can make for a special, memorable ceremony.

- Choose a ceremony location that is close to the reception site. If a ceremony will take place in a house of worship, try to choose a reception

venue close to the ceremony site. This keeps guests, some of whom may be out-of-towners who have already traveled extensively, from spending too much time on the road during the day of the wedding.

- Get to know the officiant. The officiant should be someone with whom you both feel comfortable. This person should know you well enough that he or she can preside over the ceremony and add sentiments that come across as authentic and personalized.

- Do your best to avoid especially lengthy ceremonies. Couples will need to meet the religious requirements if they are getting married in the faith, and there may be some aspects of the ceremony that you cannot cut short or modify. But if you have wiggle room, try to keep the ceremony to around 30 minutes; otherwise, you run the risk of guests getting antsy, especially if children are in the audience.

- Decorate the ceremony space. While the altar and aisle are key places to draw attention, couples also can dress up the chairs/pews, ceiling (if allowed), and entrance to the space to make it welcoming and romantic.

Even wedding ceremonies that likely won't run long can benefit from some pre-wedding planning.

Couples often spend months planning a wedding reception, but don't overlook the importance of devoting time to planning the ceremony. A wedding ceremony might not last long, but it is the most crucial component of a couple's wedding day and can even set the tone for the rest of the festivities.



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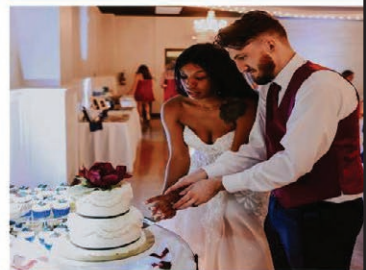
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Who will marry you?

Choosing an officiant for your special day

BY SHELLEY TERRY
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He's proposed, you accepted, now who's going to marry you?

For couples marrying in a place of worship where they are already members, the search stops there. The resident clergy will perform the ceremony. As soon as you get engaged, alert the office staff to book a date. Be sure to ask about any prenup-

tial counseling that may be required.

But if you want to leave religion out of ceremony, or go for a simpler, yet unique event, an officiant certified by the state may be what you are looking for.

Josh Woodard of Pierpont Township is a certified officiant. He went online and did all of the paperwork to become a licensed officiant and then started his own business.

"I've always enjoyed making people's days the best they can be," said Woodard, who started Tree of Life Ceremonies — Weddings and Celebrations of Life. "Whether it's a wedding day or end of life ceremony, I have the experience and knowledge to preside over the events with poise and respect, tailored to the customer's needs and wants.

Once you've contacted Woodard, he'll talk to

you about how he structures the ceremony. Woodard works from a basic blueprint he customizes to the couple, allowing them to select readings, poems or passages of scripture. Catering to the couple, Woodard said he reviews the ceremony; however, some couples prefer him to preserve an element of surprise.

Woodard, a 2008 graduate of the Ohio Center of Broadcasting and former florist shop owner, boasts more than a decade of experience with speaking and officiating.

"I serve the northeast Ohio region, with willingness to travel," he said. "I'll make sure the event runs smoothly and it's presided over with the utmost quality."

Plan to spend \$100 to \$300, maybe more for travel time, he said.

Instead of a traditional wedding, many couples choose to get married for free at the Ashtabula County Courthouse. Court officials said couples must first get a marriage license, then call Eastern County Court and make an appointment with Judge Harold Specht. Officials say the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Josh Woodard of Pierpont Township, center, officiates a wedding in the summer of 2017 at the Estate on Coffee Creek in Austinburg. The couple prefers to remain anonymous.

judge marries couples on Monday, Tuesday or Thursday mornings, if court is in session.

If you choose a church wedding, religious organizations often encourage donations.

If you're a member of the congregation, the fee will likely be waived, although it's still customary to tip. And

while it's not required that you ask the officiant to the reception, it's a nice gesture.

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Music a critical component

Few things set the mood of a wedding more effectively than music. Beautiful songs often are incorporated into wedding ceremonies, and romantic or upbeat songs intermingle to create a festive mix at receptions.

Playlists curated specifically for weddings can be found online to help couples narrow down their options. According to Wedding Forward, a wedding planning guide, wedding planning experts and modern couples agree that wedding playlists should have a 60/40 split of classics and new wedding songs.

Music is a personal choice, but couples may benefit by considering who will be in attendance at their weddings. In so doing, couples can ensure the music played at their weddings reaches as many people as possible there:

WEDDING PROCESSIONAL SONG

The processional is the moment the party walks down the aisle. Music may be a traditional hymn, classical music or a favorite contemporary song.

• **Bridal processional song:** In many traditional wedding ceremonies, the bride walks down the aisle separately, with her father or both parents. She customarily will have a different song from the rest of the wedding party. While “Bridal Chorus/Wedding March” is a traditional choice, some brides may prefer a different tune.

WEDDING RECESSIONAL SONG

Again, depending on the ceremony location and choices, the recessional may be a classical piece or a hymn. Some couples choose an upbeat song for their first official promenade as a married couple.

WEDDING PARTY ENTRANCE SONG

Couples can ask their music vendor to put together the majority of the songs for their reception, but they may want to choose their own party entrance. This song typically is a fast-paced, upbeat song that gets the crowd pumping and ready for a fun night. Think “Dynamite” by Taio Cruz or “Can’t Stop the Feeling!” by Justin Timberlake.

FIRST DANCE

The first dance song is another personal choice for the couple. Slow songs traditionally are chosen, but couples who want something a little different have increasingly selected faster songs and paired them with rehearsed choreography. “Thinking Out Loud” by Ed Sheeran has become a popular first dance song.

How to choose the right wedding photographer

Couples who want to find the best photographer for their wedding day can ask several questions before making their final decision.

WHAT STYLE DO YOU SPECIALIZE IN?

Photographers may be able to shoot various styles of photos, but may specialize in a specific type. For example, some photographers specialize in photojournalism, while others may excel at portraiture. Going with a photographer who has the most expertise shooting the style you prefer will help produce the desired results.

WHO WILL BE SHOOTING MY WEDDING?

Certain photography studios have several photographers working under one roof. Just because you meet with one does not necessarily mean that

photographer will be on site, unless it is specified in the contract.

HAVE YOU WORKED AT MY VENUE BEFORE?

Photographers may be familiar with several local wedding venues and houses of worship. A photographer who has experience working in the locations where couples will tie the knot and subsequently celebrate might produce the best results, but lack of experience with particular venues need not exclude other professionals.

CAN WE SEE A GALLERY OF A RECENT EVENT?

According to Brides magazine, unlike an album or a highlight gallery, a full gallery provides a better sense of a photographer’s style and attention to detail.

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Florists preparing for 2021 wedding season

Rose gold, burgundy figure to be hot colors

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

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Area florists provided flowers for smaller events in 2020, as weddings changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bernie Muto, wedding specialist at Capitena's Flowers and a wedding coordinator at Designs by Bernie, said that rose gold and burgundy are popular colors this year. "Deeper, richer colors," she said.

For flowers, roses are always popular, Muto said. Orchids and lilies are also popular. "Girls like those big, kind of garden roses," Muto said.

Most of the weddings Muto was going to do in 2020 were pushed into 2021.

Muto said that people are looking for flower arrangements that look natural, but with a touch of class.

Numbers have changed when it comes to weddings.

"You're not having those big, two to three hundred guest wed-



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Luanne Serpico prepares plants at Capitena's Floral and Gift Shop in Ashtabula. Local florists will soon be gearing up for the upcoming wedding season.

dings, you don't need as much," Muto said. "They're still spending money on themselves and their bridesmaids and on the groom and the groomsmen."

The number of centerpieces Muto has done have gone down, she said.

"We're hoping that girls can have those somewhat larger weddings come back," Muto said. "We don't

want to keep somebody from having a big wedding forever. We want the pandemic to end and all our lives to get back to normal."

Allison Pinkney, owner of Flowers on the Avenue, said that she had done more events than usual in 2020.

The difference was that most of them were smaller than usual.

"Everyone's doing smaller things since

the pandemic started," Pinkney said. She has been doing more things for the ceremony and fewer things for the reception.

Pinkney has gotten requests for oversized, elegant bouquets, she said. The requests included garden roses and silver dollar eucalyptus, which is a dusty greenery that has been trendy in the last year, Pinkney said.

"The colors that have been trendy are blush, navy, cream ... and burgundy," Pinkney said.

"That's been the colors that I've done. Last year I probably did, I don't even know how many weddings, but I would say that 75 percent of my weddings were those colors."

A number of people moved their weddings to this year from last year, Pinkney said.

'We're hoping that girls can have those somewhat larger weddings come back. We don't want to keep somebody from having a big wedding forever.'

Bernie Muto
Wedding specialist

Money-saving tips

The question was popped; the engagement ring presented. What's the next step on the road to the wedding? Saving should definitely be on couples' minds.

A wedding is likely the most costly party couples will ever throw. According to The Knot's 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of a wedding in 2019 was \$33,900. There are many different costs associated with weddings. Some are predictable, while others are unexpected.

Investopedia says the vast majority of couples budget too little for their weddings and also end up spending more than they had planned. Various strategies can make it easier to save for a wedding and avoid a post-wedding financial hangover.

GET INFORMED

It's impossible to budget for a wedding and ultimately save without knowledge of what services and items cost in the region where you live. A wedding in New York City will be expensive, while a wedding in Mississippi will cost a lot less, indicates SuperMoney's guide to wedding costs.

Conduct some research and find out what photographers, florists, transportation providers, reception halls, and wedding wardrobe vendors charge for common services. This will paint a vivid picture of what a wedding may cost in your area.

FLESH OUT THE BUDGET

Once you have gathered estimates, you can then figure out a financial goal. This also is when you can determine where to rein in spending and where you might want to splurge. If having a video memory of the wedding is not a top priority, you can skip videography services. If you have a special flower that you like, you may want to budget more for that bloom even if it isn't in season.

SET UP A DEDICATED SAVINGS ACCOUNT

One of the easiest ways to save for big-ticket items like a wedding, home purchase or other financial goals is to use an automatic savings account that may be available through your bank or employer. An automatic savings plan will pull a

set amount from a personal checking account into a savings account through auto-draft. The bride and groom can link individual checking accounts to one savings account to contribute jointly.

AVOID OVERSPENDING

An analysis of your spending habits will likely reveal areas where you can scale back so you can devote more funds to wedding savings. Do you need a takeout coffee in the morning or can you brew a pot at home? Might you be able to scale back on streaming services? Do you feel comfortable buying less expensive store brand groceries over name brands? Small cost savings can quickly

add up.

ADD UP GIFTS

Factor in deduction of expenses that other people will commit to covering for wedding expenses, but only if you have concrete confirmation. A parent may host the rehearsal dinner. One's relative may offer to pass down an antique wedding gown to wear. But rather than simply removing these gifts from your savings calculations, keep them as a safety net to put toward unforeseen expenses.

Saving for a wedding can be challenging. But various strategies can help couples plan their dream weddings without breaking the bank.

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