

When planning a wedding, Back Mountain has it all

Area businesses help brides and grooms make special day one to remember.

By SARAH HITE
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The Back Mountain has a lot to offer for blushing brides and gallant grooms, and keeping nuptials unique and affordable are two keys to staying local for the big day. From saying "Yes!" to vowing "I do," Back Mountain businesses are prepared to make the big day as special as you are.

The rings

Engagement rings can range from traditional to eclectic to trendy to extraordinary, but finding one place that carries it all is what will make the choice even easier for brides and grooms-to-be.

Ochman's Coins and Jewelry on Church Street in Dallas offers engagement rings, wedding bands, bridal accessories, wedding attendant gifts, special keepsakes and custom ordering to guarantee one-of-a-kind accents to make it a day to remember.

Fran Ochman, who's been in the business for 31 years, said the jewelry store can provide custom earrings, bracelets and necklaces for brides and their bridesmaids.

"We can custom make something to fit in with the gown and the color scheme," she said.

While Ochman says the most popular style of engage-

ment ring is the princess cut diamond, the store also has three showcases of estate jewelry — unique "pre-owned" pieces bought from local estate sales that can be resized and restored to become a vintage piece to treasure for years to come.

Another interesting offering from Ochman's is the Lucky Wedding Sixpence, a sixpence coin attached to a keepsake card.

"Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, a lucky sixpence in her shoe!" reads the card, which is given to the bride for good luck.

"Most jewelry stores carry engagement rings and bridal jewelry," said Ochman. "This is something different."

For the guys, Ochman's also sells money clips, watches and current silver dollar coins that can become groomsmen gifts or gifts from the bride to the groom.

Ochman knows how important an engagement is to a woman — it's not the size of the ring, but the size of one's heart.

"A fellow came in to buy a small diamond — it was probably three-tenths of a carat," said Ochman. "They had been married for a few months but he couldn't afford to buy his wife a ring. His wife came in to have it sized and she was crying because she loved it so much."

The reception

The Irem Country Club in Dallas Township features

sweeping lush landscapes and a 4,018 square foot ballroom — all within a stone's throw from Main Street in Dallas.

And once you get engaged, Laurie Knauer, special event coordinator at Irem, can help you plan the rest. Engagement parties, bridal showers, rehearsal dinners, the ceremony and the reception, Irem Country Club can offer spaces for all events that contribute to a couple's wedded bliss.

"We offer discounts on showers or rehearsal dinners if you've already booked your wedding," said Knauer, who's been with the country club since 2008.

Another perk of the packages offered by the club — those wishing to wed on Irem's green golf course and dance the night away under ornate chandeliers are not required to be members of the country club.

"Anybody can come here and get married," said Joy Hubshman, marketing director.

Once you decide to celebrate at Irem, much of the hassle of contacting numerous vendors and coordinating little details gets easier, too. The Irem Country Club offers all-inclusive packages at competitive prices, which include dinner, drinks and dessert.

Knauer works with couples on choosing everything from table linens to floral centerpieces for their wedding day — something she said wasn't available to her at her own wedding 22 years ago.

"I had to organize all the different pieces of my wedding, so there was more time spent



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Fran Ochman, owner of Ochman's Jewelry in Dallas, holds a tray of diamond wedding and engagement rings.

on that," she said. "I also didn't have an event planner."

Knauer insists that she meets with couples regularly, from the first consultation to the actual day. She also said the club has a banquet captain that ensures the event will go off without a hitch throughout the night.

"You really get to know the couple and moms and dads," said Knauer.

A personal affair in a luxurious setting that takes much out of the stress of wedding planning, Irem Country Club could be the perfect place to say "I do" in style, said Knauer.

Melissa Musto and Jason Thompson, of Kingston, are seen here on their Sept. 18, 2010 wedding day. The couple was married at the first golf tee at Irem Country Club and held their reception in the ballroom.



The ballroom at the Irem Country Club in Dallas Township is 4,018 square feet of space that can comfortably accommodate up to 200 people. Customization is key — Laurie Knauer, special events coordinator, can help you choose table linens and centerpieces for your special day.

Dallas resident authors landmark book

Dallas resident Thomas Hajkowski, Ph.D., assistant professor of history at Misericordia University, recently published a landmark book that is the first to examine how the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) shaped Bri-

tain's national identity during the second quarter of the 20th century.

The book took 10 years to research and write, and began as his doctoral dissertation in 2000 at Northwestern University. In between, he spent nine months in Britain conducting research and six years to write, revise and conduct additional research. He spent the last three years shepherding his first book through the publication and production process.



Hajkowski

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