

CARL HOUSE, A CLASS ACT, by Leigh Anne Jones

More than a venue, Carl House creates unparalleled experiences for exceptional occasions.

Fate smiled on a forlorn estate when owner and entrepreneur BB Webb saw its potential. Hidden under a century of neglect, she knew she had a winner in the classic Southern mansion, complete with soaring white columns and covered verandas.

Before opening the house as an event venue in July of 2003, Webb employed skilled craftsmen and women to restore the house. Selecting aged wood, marble floors and fabric wall coverings, she refitted the manor to highlight its original grandeur, and then some. Decked out with modern amenities, Carl House also gained a grand ballroom, mezzanine and third floor in the remodeling.

Now, manicured foliage and abundant flowers line paths and courtyards. Designed with peak seasons in mind, the gardens dazzle year-round while luxurious comforts await guests inside. It is easy to see why Carl House has become one of the South's premier wedding venues.

Along with carefully chosen preferred vendors, the staff is committed to creating dream weddings right down to the last moment.

After nine years together, Donna Hunter and Desiree Ranne of Dacula, Georgia, decided it was time to hold a commitment ceremony and picked Carl House for the occasion. Exceeding the expectations of all involved, the day ended in a "free style" reception, as Donna puts it, with singing karaoke and dancing into the early morning. As she worked upstairs, Webb remembers listening to the jubilation emanating from the ballroom and thinking, "This is why I built Carl House: to create extraordinary, memorable events!"

Personal attendants make any brides' preparations a breeze, styling hair, applying make-up and tending to any other day-of concerns. Leaving business matters in capable hands, Carl House couples are encouraged to relax and enjoy their special day.

"We provide 'one stop shop' planning options for those who have busy schedules and don't have the time to vet out vendors or other event services," says Webb.

"The entire staff welcomed us with open arms. They were willing to help us in any area to prepare for the ceremony," says Donna, "And during the ceremony everyone from the setup staff, service staff to management were all so attentive to our needs and gracious."

Customizable Menu/Vendor packages let busy couples select from an assortment of tastes and spending plans, leaving time-consuming details in the hands of wedding specialists. Florals, food, photo booths, entertainment, cakes, custom linens and photography, for starters, can easily be arranged with minimal hassle to the client. Classic treats like chocolate, punch, and champagne fountains are on the menu too, along with gourmet coffee stations and, of course, candy stations.

Nestled between the suburban sprawl of Atlanta and the college town of Athens, Georgia, Carl House is an entire world away, says Webb.

Spacious, tended paths meander through the estate's four beautifully cultivated acres past willow trees. The elegant brickwork of the Ceremony Garden is picturesque but not ostentatious, ideal for a completely private, open-air wedding. An added bonus: Mall of Georgia, one of the Southeast's largest shopping malls, and Château Élan, a well-liked Georgia winery, are both within ten miles of Carl House.

"Anyone who wants to have a truly memorable time of any kind should definitely book Carl House for their event," says Donna, who is quick to recommend it to other gay or lesbian couples looking to hold an upscale event. Although she and Desiree hosted a moderate guest list of 65, the accessible, affordable venue seats up to 350 guests indoors.

"The staff at Carl House treated us like royalty from beginning to end," says Donna, "The food is to die for. The service is excellent, the size of the property is very accommodating and the House itself is breathtaking."

Recently, Kimberly Coates, Floral Manager and General Manager of Carl House, traded in a successful retail floristry business near Boston to join BB and the Carl House staff. Thriving on positive social interaction and customer service opportunities, Coates flourished in Georgia, becoming General Manager of Carl House in short order and concurrently earning her MBA.

"We still hear from friends who attended what a great time they had, how beautiful Carl House is and how wonderfully delicious the food was," says Donna. Renowned after nearly eight years in operation, the staff of Carl House is building a reputation among Southerners and those seeking a charming Southern destination.

Terrell Johnson, a celebrated chef (and ice sculptor) also recently joined the Carl House team as Executive Chef.

"Johnson uses all fresh regional ingredients," says Webb, "His creations are as beautiful as they are tasty! Consistently!"

Webb advises couples to book Saturday evening events a year in advance, but the full Carl House experience usually takes three months to plan.

To find out what the buzz is all about, consider RSVP-ing for a Wine Dinner with BB, Terrell's exquisite cuisine and a heapin' portion of Southern hospitality.

"Wine dinners are an opportunity for the 'foodie' or wine lover to experience who we are," says Webb, emphasizing the venue's flexibility, "We are always open to hosting corporate events, holiday parties, anniversary parties and the like. We have a magnificent chef and availability during the week. A magnificent home, open to the gay and lesbian community, is just outside the perimeter but a world away, for reasonably priced commitment ceremonies or any other gathering," says Webb. A member of the Gay and Lesbian Chamber, she anticipates hosting one of their events soon.

“Carl House is all about hospitality and the development of long-term relationships with our clients. We want to share not only in their wedding day, but for them to remember us for all the special moments in their lives,” says Coates. “We want them to realize that they can bring back memories of their special day and experience the warmth and hospitality of Carl House in other ways, perhaps via our Wine Dinners or Mother's Day Brunch.”

The Carl House team encourages everyone to visit their blog at <<<http://carlhouse.wordpress.com>>> and be part of Carl House Facebook and Twitter conversations at <<<http://www.facebook.com/carlhousefans>>> and <<<http://www.twitter.com/carlhouse>>>.

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Office Hours

Monday - Friday 9-4pm

Saturday and evening hours by appointment

PHOTO INFORMATION/ CAPTIONS

1. Donna & Desiree, October 22, 2010 - Credit Kim Wolfe
2. Home #8 - Sarah Eubanks Photography
3. Summer 2007 - PT Grounds #2, No Credit Needed