

Open House at Gables To Spotlight Weddings

The Gables, on Centre Street in Beach Haven, will hold a Wedding Open House on Feb. 18 for engaged couples and their entourages. From noon to 3 p.m., the open house provides the opportunity for couples to tour the venue, sample hors d'oeuvres, and meet with Gables staff as well as a handful of local vendors who frequently participate in weddings at The Gables.

Reservations for the event are requested and may be made via phone at 609-492-3553/888-LBI-GABLES or by e-mail at info@gablesbi.com.

A similar open house in November was successful, so the owners opted to hold another one now for couples who got engaged during the holidays or for Valentine's Day.

The Gables is proud to announce a recent distinction – the restaurant/bed and breakfast accommodation has been selected to receive a 2012 WeddingWire Bride's Choice Award in the category of Ceremony & Reception Venue.

The annual awards program recognizes the top local wedding vendors from the WeddingWire Network who demonstrate excellence in quality, service, responsiveness and professionalism within the wedding industry. The Gables was chosen based on its stellar reviews from past newlywed clients, according to WeddingWire.

"It is with great pleasure that we congratulate The Gables for their continued professionalism and commitment to enriching the wedding planning experience for engaged couples," said Timothy Chi, CEO of WeddingWire.

Owner Sondra Beninati said, "The Gables became a wedding venue by chance, not design. ... A couple would come for dinner and decide that The Gables had exactly the right atmosphere, great food and gracious charm that they wanted for their wedding. We provide them with a customized menu of four-star food, rather than the usual catering-hall fare. The bride and groom open The Gables as if it were their own home and they've invited all of their family and friends to a great old Victorian house for a wonderful party. Our garden becomes the ballroom and makes a wonderful ceremony site. We also have five unique guest rooms for the wedding party. Each bride is different, and The Gables celebrates that."

The Gables is recognized as part of the top

5 percent of wedding professionals in the WeddingWire local vendor community, comprised of more than 200,000 wedding professionals throughout the United States and Canada. The WeddingWire Network includes leading wedding planning sites WeddingWire, Project Wedding, Brides.com, Martha Stewart Weddings and Weddingbee.

The Gables' wedding website can be seen at gablesbi.com. —M.S.

OCC Senior Living Expo Calls for Exhibitors

Ocean County College encourages area businesses and organizations to reserve a space at the second annual Senior Living Expo, to be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, March 15, on OCC's main campus in Toms River.

"This is a great opportunity for your business or organization to reach a diverse audience of seniors," said RoseAnn D'Urso, manager of promotional programming at the college.

Expo highlights include: health and wellness screenings, presentations, free food samples from local eateries, entertainment, door prizes, free giveaways, and the opportunity to sell merchandise.

The registration fee for businesses and organizations is \$99, and includes an eight-foot-long, skirted table with two chairs, as well as a listing on the OCC Academy for Lifelong Learning's Senior Living Expo web site.

If a booth requires electricity, there will be an additional fee of \$24, as spaces with access to electricity are limited.

Reservation forms, with payment, are due by Wednesday, Feb. 29.

The Senior Living Expo is sponsored by Barnabas Health/Community Medical Center, Harrogate, New Jersey Natural Gas and Ocean County College.

For more information or to register, contact Joanne Padrone, manager of resource development, at 732-255-0400, extension 2065, or jpadrone@ocean.edu. —J.K.-H.

Chiropractor Nicole Bonner On Who's Who List

The directors of The Heritage Registry of Who's Who announce the inclusion of Nicole

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Ideas Exchanged On Capital Train

Lori Pepenella of the Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce was on board the networking train to Washington, D.C., Jan. 26, talking tourism and taxation with other participants in the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce's 75th annual Walk to Washington.

The Amtrak charter train carried business leaders from around the state to the nation's capital to dine with representatives in Congress and the N.J. Legislature, along with Gov. Christie and his cabinet members. The event is called the Walk to Washington because the riders rarely sit; they walk the 12 train cars talking and exchanging business cards. As the state Destination Marketing Organization director for the local chamber, Pepenella talked tourism and business. She got aboard the multi-leg journey in Philadelphia.

"I'm finally getting my voice back," she said with a laugh on Monday.

"You're meeting people and re-acquainting yourself with others – basically, you're making new contacts," Pepenella said. "I had the opportunity to see some people from throughout the state who I don't see on a regular basis. It was certainly a wonderful thing for our region to be a part of it because it shows that we're part of what's happening throughout the state."

In the business climate, "there's a lot of excitement going on; new business is coming in," she said. "There was a lot of discussion, too, about the minimum wage increase (from the current \$7.25 per hour to \$8.50) that is being proposed in Trenton that affects a lot of the small-business owners, any business owners."

Also an issue among merchants is the fact that Internet consumers don't pay sales tax on items purchased from out-of-state.

"A lot of smaller businesses are calling the term 'showrooming,' saying that people are getting all the advice and follow-up from salespeople and then going online and shopping around," Pepenella reported. "What some business owners are saying is that the sales tax is supposed to get reported but doesn't. They wanted to know if there is any kind of leverage that is going to help businesses compete – that's not just in New Jersey, but is going on all over, with Internet sales vs. brick-and-mortar shops."

Christie was the speaker at the dinner, attended by an estimated 900 people. "He had positive things to say about how business is steadily rebuilding in the state," Pepenella reported, "and how we have things that are

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ASK THE EXPERT

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Upside Down On Your Mortgage?

"Upside Down", "Underwater", "Negative Equity" – all terms we hear relating to the Real Estate Market and Housing Crisis. What does it really mean and what are your options?

Your equity in your property is the amount you owe to your mortgage lender versus the current value of your property. You are underwater when you owe more than its current value. If you do not need to move and you can make your payments, **do nothing**. Home values will recover. Continue to make your payments and honor your commitment to the lender – they gave you the money and you signed a note personally guaranteeing the loan. This is the right thing to do. In time, real estate values increase so you will recover your equity and probably see a profit.

If you are having difficulty making payments but want to stay in your home, consider a loan modification. Most banks are willing to make modifications to keep you in the property. Banks do not want the property back. Successful loan modifications usually result in the homeowner reducing their monthly interest expense to a level they can afford, avoiding foreclosure, and keeping you in your house.

Modification denied? Downsizing? Relocating? The **Short Sale** option is the best alternative, allowing you to maintain your dignity and minimize the damage to your credit by avoiding foreclosure. You will also avoid a deficiency judgment (the difference in the amount the bank receives at closing and the amount you owe) if it is your primary residence, and the government will not expect you to pay the taxes on the deficiency (Mortgage Debt Relief Act of 2007), normally considered income. Mortgage lenders may give the borrower a monetary incentive to complete the short sale rather than foreclose.

Two other options: a "**Deed in Lieu Of Foreclosure**" and a **Foreclosure**. The lenders prefer a "Deed in Lieu" – they win, you lose. This is a voluntary process where you give the lender your property. Your credit is damaged and the "Deed" appears on your credit report. Short sales are a far better choice.

In a foreclosure, everyone loses. Your credit is severely damaged, the lender has to incur heavy costs to retain the property, and in all probability you will be left with a deficiency judgment that will follow you for years.

Considering any of these options? Talk to your local Real Estate Broker, your Attorney (laws constantly change), and your Accountant to get the latest information. ♦



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