



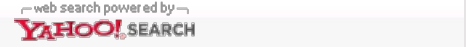
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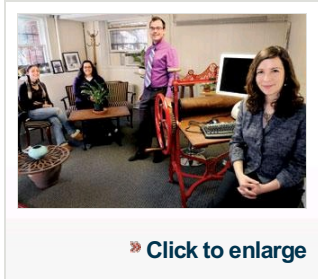
Vowing to go Green: Growing company helps eco-friendly brides

Published: Sunday, February 7, 2010

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By **Cara Baruzzi**, Register Business Editor

NEW HAVEN — Like many brides, Kate Harrison had a tough time finding exactly what she wanted when it came to certain aspects of her wedding.



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Unlike most wives-to-be, however, Harrison turned her frustration — over the scarcity of “green,” eco-friendly weddings options — into a thriving business.

“We were just trying to plan our wedding,” she said, remembering her engagement in 2006. “We wanted to have a green wedding. It was a lot harder than I thought it should be. Even finding recycled invitations at the time was really tricky.”

Harrison used the experiences and obstacles she encountered when planning her own wedding to form The Green Bride Guide, of which she is founder and chief executive officer.

Headquartered at 315 Whitney Ave., the company runs a Web site, at www.greenbrideguide.com, that provides tips, suggestions and ideas for throwing a green wedding. It also connects visitors to a nationwide network of environmentally conscious vendors that offer various wedding services — including florists that sell locally grown flowers, caterers that provide locally sourced food, printers that make invitations out of recycled materials, and even green dry cleaners.

Roughly 13,000 couples visit the site each month, according to Harrison.

The site offers weekly tips for brides and grooms-to-be on its home page. Last week’s was: “Say ‘I Do’ to carbon-neutral transportation by leaving your ceremony in style on a bicycle built for two.”

Harrison, who studied law and forestry as part of a joint program at Yale University, launched the site in February 2009.

Earlier, she wrote the book The Green Bride Guide, which was published in late 2008, while she was pursuing plans to become a lawyer. She interviewed about 500 vendors for the book, she said, “which was pretty much the entire world of green at the time.”

Once the book hit store shelves, she began receiving e-mails from green vendors that were entering the marketplace. Harrison started a blog — which now appears on greenbrideguide.com, titled “Ask Kate” — posting pictures from her own wedding and those of her friends.

“Suddenly, I discovered, what had kind of been a side project was taking on a life of its own,” she said of the business.

In early 2009, she entered a business plan she had developed in various competitions and won two of them, including one run by Yale. “That gave me the seed money to really start the company,” she

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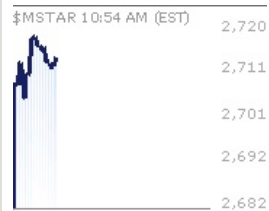
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said of the wins.

In the summer of 2009, she was accepted into the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute, a program that aims to develop entrepreneurs among the Yale community and encourages them to open businesses within the New Haven area. The YEI, Harrison said, connected her to more funding for the company, introduced her to mentors, and helped her put together the team with which she current works.

The Green Bride Guide has three full-time employees, several part-time workers and interns.

"Kate continues to be one of the shining stars of the 2009 Yale Entrepreneurial Institute's Summer Fellowship Program. We've seen her grow what started out as a book and an idea into a thriving business and the number one green weddings Web site," said Shana Schneider, deputy director the YEI.

"It's exciting to see yet another YEI affiliated start-up and New Haven-based company with such strong prospects for profitability that also focuses on being green," she said.

The company is poised for future growth, Harrison said, with a forthcoming partnership with AOL in the works. Also, The Green Bride Guide has starting working with the Wedding Planning Institute to offer a "green wedding planner" certification class for professionals who want to cater to eco-friendly couples.

Even in the few years since Harrison planned her own wedding, the industry has changed, with more green vendors opening businesses, she said. "The market has really taken off."

But while there are more businesses serving green brides and grooms, many are small and hard to find, Harrison said. Some don't show up until the 40th or 50th page of Google search results online, she said.

She sees her company's role, amid the growing industry, as providing a place where couples can easily find everything they need to know to plan an environmentally friendly wedding.

So far, she said, the response from readers of the book and visitors to the site, has been positive.

"It's been amazing," she said. "We're really trying to offer a one-stop shop for green weddings."

Contact Cara Baruzzi at cbaruzzi@newhavenregister.com or 203-789-5748.

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don wrote on Feb 7, 2010 4:12 AM:

" How romantic a business that caters to fools in love. "

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BribeGuide wrote on Feb 7, 2010 4:50 PM:

" This will be just as temporary as the marriages are. "

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Fran Marotta wrote on Feb 7, 2010 6:14 PM:

" Being friendly to the environment for your future children; what a great way to start a marriage. I visited your website. I not only found it easy to use, but it is very educational. "

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Sheryl wrote on Feb 8, 2010 5:14 PM:

" Kate Harrison is a committed environmentalist, a great business woman and just a really nice person. She also is committed to helping other green businesses succeed and I'm glad to see this article! "

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