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For Immediate Release
March 17, 2009

PLANNING A DREAM WEDDING ON A BUDGET
Butterfly Pavilion provides money saving tips

(Denver, CO) – Planning a wedding is hard work; planning a phenomenal wedding while staying within a determined budget can be even harder. Anyone can suggest creating centerpieces or using your backyard for a location; but what about the truly exceptional ideas – the type of budget-conscious ideas that create a spectacular wedding, without the guests (or wallet) ever suspecting?

According to TheKnot.com web site, the average couple spends \$27,000 on their wedding! That's four times more than one year of in-state tuition at the University of Colorado at Boulder! But there are ways to save and it starts with planning.

Engaged couples should begin the planning process by visiting www.costofwedding.com to learn how to create a realistic budget. The free site provides a list of expenditure items and tracks spending. It also helps couples to evaluate the importance of each service and decide what percent of the budget it should be allocated.

Once the planning is complete, the next step is to get creative! Couples who are willing to “think outside the box” and “get their hands dirty” are likely to save thousands of dollars without much effort. And trust us, no one suspects the difference. Soon-to-be brides will be asking you for tips. Below are just a few ideas that have saved couples thousands on their weddings. For more ideas, visit <http://www.butterflies.org/wedding.cfm>.

Invitations

Take advantage of wedding websites that allow you to communicate all aspects of your wedding with guests and vendors for free. Then, use online invite sites such as Evite to send the invitation – you save the environment and money (skip buying stamps!) at the same time. Or for your less tech-savvy guests, send simple invitations that use recycled paper purchased in bulk and provide a RSVP postcard rather than an additional card and envelope.

Venue

Your venue options are limitless.... Hotels, museums, parks, churches, recreation centers, art galleries... Choose a site that allows you to control your budget when it comes to important (and potentially expensive) details. Most non-traditional locations allow outside catering, self-catering, outside cakes/desserts, self set-up and built-in music/speaker systems. Search for discounted rates on Sunday through Thursday celebrations and also during non-wedding months (October-April).

Food

The food you provide should be based on the time of the reception; celebrations planned near meal times require more food. If you feel brave, dare to cook and serve your own treats. Otherwise, strategically plan an affordable meal with a caterer. Often caterers will agree to provide the hot food and will let you provide the salads, fruit, cake etc. If possible, create more than one food station so it appears to be more food and it encourages your guests to mingle. Caterers often have incredible connections for rentals and linens so take advantage of their professional expertise!

Cake

Traditionally the cake is a focal point for the reception; however, new cake trends are emerging. Offer cupcakes, chocolate covered strawberries (do these yourself ahead of time), or personalized cookies. These yummy treats can also serve as colorful and delectable centerpieces for guest tables. If you do choose a traditional cake, provide a small but elaborate cake for the bridal party and serve sheet cake to the guests. This also allows you to serve a larger selection of cake. If you have an exceptionally large reception, hire a baker to create a fake cake with two real slices for the customary cake cutting—then serve sheet cake.

Alcohol Service

The bar can be the biggest budget-eater, so choose a facility that fits your alcohol plan. Madhoo Seth, owner of The Gourmet Kitchen, suggests providing a cocktail hour with signature drinks that fit your theme or color scheme, followed by beer and wine only for the rest of the evening. Most liquor stores will allow you to purchase in bulk (look for coupons!) and return any unopened items. Sandy Connor, of Hearts Desire Catering, suggests printing a bar menu that lists the types of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks available for your event. This speeds up the process of guests getting a drink as they can see in advance what is available as they wait in line.

Photography

Unlike the steak dinner you want to provide, pictures last forever. Invest in this special detail. Dancing Cloud Photography owner, Simon Roberts, offers his clients options based on their budgets. Flexible vendors, like Roberts, can offer a minimum service, such as photographing the ceremony only and providing a CD of images rather than an expensive photo album.

Supplement the professional photographer with an eager college photography student. Offer the student a referral letter and free pictures for their portfolio. Ask them to manipulate and edit the shots you love.

Create a free profile through a photo-sharing website. Ask guests to take their own candid shots with their personal cameras to upload to your profile. Place a card at each place setting with the login and password information. This innovative way to share photos (without printing or postage!) saves money and invites your guests to share memories.

Flowers

No wedding is complete without fresh flowers, but they can be a budget buster. One idea is to use the bridal party's bouquets as the centerpieces at the bridal party table, family tables and food stations. Then, at the end of the evening, give the bouquets to special guests as gifts. On guest tables, focus on centerpieces that are functional, such as desserts or cheese/fruit trays or bottles of wine. To give the table dimension, wrap wood or foam blocks in cloth and stack items. Scatter rose petals for color.

Cherrie, of Cherry Blossoms florist, recommends selecting your colors first and flowers second. Too often brides are caught up with their dream flowers, which maybe out of season, and therefore much more expensive. Be open to all types of flowers and foliage—you can compliment expensive must-have items with less expensive flowers. Cherrie also suggests floating candles with sprigs of beautiful (and affordable) ivy in glass bowls.

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The Butterfly Pavilion combines education with hands-on fun to teach visitors about invertebrates, science and conservation; and houses a rainforest conservatory filled with 1,200 free-flying tropical butterflies imported from around the globe. The Butterfly Pavilion is open daily, 9 am – 5 pm with the last entrance at 4:15 pm. Admission is \$7.95 adults; \$5.95 for seniors (65+); \$4.95 children ages 2 – 12. For additional information please visit www.butterflies.org or call 303-469-5441. The Butterfly Pavilion is a Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) funded organization.