

February Bridal Showcase 2026



Sparks & Spoons offers tailored events

by Amy Ash Nixon
NORTH HAVERHILL—Sparks & Spoons Events is a family affair committed to helping couples put on the weddings (or other special celebrations) of their dreams.

The mother-daughter team, Wendy Spooner and Kirsten (Spooner) Farrell, launched the business as the world was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Sparks & Spoons started in 2021, we are coming up on our five-year anniversary,” said Wendy in a recent interview with the *Journal Opinion*.

She had worked in the wedding business for a long time, doing off-site catering, for about 25 years, “give or take.”

“When Kirsten was growing up, she was part of my waitstaff, plus my older daughters, too.” At the time, wedding planners were uncommon, said Wendy. Often, the catering crew multi-tasked and ran around helping tend to myriad last-minute details like lighting candles.

“We made sure the reception hall was ready to go,” she said.

Wendy took a few years off from catering work and Kirsten went off to college. Today, Kirsten works for Southern New Hampshire University as an event coordinator.

“It started out for her working at the college for added money and it developed into a career,” said Wendy of her daughter’s role at SNHU. “In 2022, she was getting married, so we started planning her wedding and it just kind of escalated into a business.”

Wendy continued, saying while they launched Sparks & Spoons on the downside of the pandemic, it was actually an opportune time. Many weddings were postponed the year before, so demand had spiked.

“We travel all over New England, in Vermont and New Hampshire and Maine, and we see one extreme to the other,” she said of the wedding events they help coordinate.

The business name? “We are all Spooners and we needed something to kind of go along with that. My kids call David, my husband, their stepfather, ‘Sparks’ ... I don’t know how or why that started!”

And Sparks & Spoons Events was so named.

And ‘Sparks’ plays a big role in the family business, as well, and deserves a lot of credit, said Wendy.

“David, my husband, is very much involved too, behind the scenes. Kirsten calls him our ‘secret sauce.’ If we are out in

the field somewhere and the table needs leveling, he’ll go fix it. If there’s a crooked arbor, he fixes it. If we need something for a wedding, we show him a picture and he builds it. He is great for hauling things, too. He is our secret sauce!”

Sparks & Spoons has an additional secret sauce in their partnership with a stunning local event venue — Jeffers Hill Farm — that features a restored barn and two restored farmhouses in Pike.

Wendy said that the relationship blossomed in recent years. She and David work at Jeffers Hill full time most of the year. They helped the owner bring the farm property to its full potential as a wedding and event venue destination.

“We reached out to the owner, Weston Jeffers Wellington, and asked him if he’d be interested in having wedding coordinators; before then, locals would just say, ‘Hey Weston, can we use your barn for a wedding?’ and he would open up the door. There was nothing else there but an empty shell.”

“He loved the idea,” said Wendy. “We wanted to just take it to a whole new level. He hired us to come in and actually start converting it into a wedding barn.”

She went on, “We manage the whole place and then when we schedule weddings, we step in as the wedding coordinators. It really truly is a family business. We work there full time from mid-March to Nov. 1 every year, David and I.”

Wendy continued, “When we started there, it was just this empty barn. We started on the inside adding chandeliers, we built a couple of bars and added special lighting. We’re really into re-purposing wood and a lot of the wood on the farm from old buildings was converted into the bars. We milled wood on the 425 acres of the farm and planed the wood and used it.”

“David built six farmers’ tables from the wood on the land.”

“I love telling that story when I’m doing the tours, nobody ever sees that anymore, milling and planing and actually building something with wood from the land,” said Wendy.

The upper level of the barn is where the dancing happens, and on the lower level, the old milk station.

“That’s all been converted into a bar and patio.” The bar is nicknamed the Whetstone Bar, a nod to Pike’s history as a whetstone manufacturing center long ago, said Wendy.

“Weston, the owner, is really into the history of Pike and preserving all of the memories,” said Wendy.

Sparks & Spoons offers a range of planning services from day-of and month-of coordination to full event planning.

“Most of what you see now is day of or month of ... just somebody to kind of lend a hand the day of to tend to all those last-minute details. If any decor from the ceremony needs to go to the reception, making sure the ceremony goes off without a hitch, it’s all coordinated.”

“People don’t need a wedding planner as much as they used to, unless they are extremely busy. A lot of people plan their own weddings and bring in the coordinators to piece all of that together and make sure their day flows without any issues,” Wendy said.

No one wants to be mid-vows and discover they forgot the ring, she said. Those things happen without careful planning and a tight schedule that someone — the wedding coordinators — are making sure is followed to a T.

“We plan it down almost to the minute and follow the schedule. We reach out to all the vendors, the photographer, the florist, we share the timeline and the itinerary for the day. We are in contact with all of them prior to the wedding and we share the master itinerary, that way everybody knows what’s happening and it’s not a fiasco.”

While Sparks & Spoons has a partnership at Jeffers Hill and more than half of their weddings take place there, Wendy and Kirsten, who lives in Manchester, also coordinate weddings at other locations. They have traveled up to the Canadian border and all over Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

They typically coordinate about 20-25 weddings annually.

“Which is pretty good, considering it’s a short season,” Wendy said.

Jeffers Hill’s barn closes up by the end of October.

In helping to transform Jeffers Hill, Wendy said she and her family took the best ideas they had seen at other venues and created their own spin at Jeffers Hill, such as a hill planted with wildflowers that is often used for photos. She got that idea from a venue in Vermont, she said, and every spring she plants the wildflowers and they get mowed down at the end of the season.

“It’s absolutely stunning!” The wedding coordinators typically start “ramping up” four to six weeks prior to the wedding, explained Wendy.

The planning begins with a Zoom meeting and a questionnaire, and Sparks & Spoons uses a software program where couples can do work on their end and Wendy and Kirsten can do their planning, too, and both can see where things are at and pull up information and share files.

“We work hand in hand,” she said. “We schedule a consultation meeting and we give them the history about ourselves and how we got into the business and we want to hear about them, how they met, and get a personal feel for the couple. We review the packages we offer and then we just build it from there and start scheduling meetings, a planning meeting, tour of the venue, and meet with the venue owners.”

Kirsten’s husband runs Dan Farrell Photography out of Manchester, and he often

See S&S on page B3



Melody Boudreau, David Spooner, Wendy Spooner, and Kirsten (Spooner) Farrell are team members at Sparks and Spoons.

COURTESY PHOTO BY NEK PHOTOGRAPHY



Jeffers Hill Farm’s agricultural heritage is on full display in its latest iteration as a venue for weddings and other special events in Pike.

COURTESY PHOTO BY DAN FARRELL PHOTOGRAPHY

From renovated barns to lakefront resorts, wedding venues abound

by Amy Ash Nixon
Couples looking to get married who are lucky enough to call the North Country home do not have to look far for picturesque venues at which to host their nuptials and receptions.

Alumni Hall, Haverhill
One local option is the historic and stately Alumni Hall which was first used as the Grafton County Courthouse and later was the auditorium and gymnasium for the Haverhill Academy school.

The building was shuttered for a time with the closure of the Academy, but a community effort to preserve and restore the important historical building got underway.

In 2005, the building was transformed into a cultural center, Court Street Arts at Alumni Hall, and it is a destination on the Connecticut River Byway, the town’s website notes.

The building is used for many arts and cultural programs and is also available to rent for functions including weddings and it is home to the nonprofit organization Court Street Arts.

According to information about renting the space, “Alumni Hall makes a beautiful setting for weddings, birthday parties, conferences, reunions, business meetings, and community events. Features of the building include a grand hall, raised stage, reception area, green room, and kitchen.”

Alumni Hall can be rented by the full day or half day

“Alumni Hall is a place where art, culture, and community come together,” the website states. “It is a place to spark the imagination, build community and enrich the lives of people throughout the region.”

To find out more about renting Alumni Hall for a wedding reception, visit courtstreetarts.org/rental/.

Jeffers Hill Farm, Pike
If your dream wedding and reception include an exquisitely restored barn, Jeffers Hill Farm might be just what you are looking for.

The 450-acre farm dates to the 1840s when the Jeffers family began farming the land. Still in the same family and today owned by Weston Jeffers Wellington, who has a capable staff to manage the growing wedding business and other functions hosted on the property.

Jeffers Hill Farm features two New England-style farmhouses so couples and their wedding parties and families can stay on-site and host their rehearsal dinners at the property and enjoy brunch the morning after the wedding celebration.

“It’s more than a day, it’s a weekend in the mountains and a lifetime of love,” they promise.

According to the Jeffers Hill story shared on its website, Weston, the current owner of the family farm property, can remember “watching local dairy farmers trundle their milkcans in pickup trucks to Blake’s Creamery in nearby East

Haverhill, and he worked as farmhand for several summers in the 1960s when the Grimes family owned the property.”

A vintage 1950 Farmall H tractor still on the property is one that Weston remembers driving and while times have changed and most of the nearby dairy farms are long gone, “Jeffers Hill Farm still clings to its agricultural roots today. The Farm provides acreage to raise hay and feed corn, and grazing land for a handful of goats and Scotch Highland cattle.”

The barn where weddings and other events are held was restored in 2012 and “today it serves as a charming and rustic venue location,” the website goes on. “There are two farmhouses on property available for rent to for guests to get the full New England farmhouse experience complete with charming antique and vintage furniture.”

In 2022, Jeffers Hill Farm began a partnership with Sparks and Spoons Events (*see story on this page*), a local wedding planning business and together they embarked on further renovations to the barn and property.

“Ten years after restoring the original barn, it now serves as an authentic New England wedding barn inviting guests to be immersed in the history while celebrating new beginnings,” according to their website.

Couples are invited to say their vows with a backdrop of the White Mountains and to tour the property ahead of time with the wedding planners to see the details now brought to life including crystal chandeliers and twinkle lights in the rustic barn.

To find out more about having your wedding celebration at Jeffers Hill Farm, visit their website at www.jeffershillfarm.com/weddings.

Ogontz, Lyman
Another venue for weddings in the North Country with a rich history is the Ogontz, located on Lake Ogontz in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. “Surrounded by lush mountains, babbling streams, and with waterfalls and small pools to relax in, Ogontz is a beauty that can only be found when you shed the hustle and city lights for a night full of stars and the sounds of nature,” their website states. “Whatever you can dream for your

See Venues on page B8



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Undercover Tents has you covered

by Amy Ash Nixon
BRADFORD—Undercover Tents has been a fixture in the region for 25 years.

It was begun by locals Paul and Kim Ordway in 2001, and Luke Knapp purchased the business 17 years ago.

He has continued to grow the small- to medium-sized event rental company since then, and explained to the *Journal Opinion* that his days “consist of overseeing day-to-day operations and making sure everything gets done on time! I am visiting nearly every tent site with the crew and work alongside them to get the job done.”

In addition to owning Undercover Tents, Knapp is the company’s crew leader. He said it takes a good-sized crew during pleasant weather to meet demand for events.

“I’m usually joined with eight to 10 workers during those busy summer months, consisting of a few wonderful return employees and some ambitious new faces.”

Knapp’s right hand is manager and event planner Erin Whiting, who has been with the business for 10 years this summer.

“My days are generally spent in the office, talking with new clients and coordinating those plus existing events,” she said. “Emails, phone calls, quotes, tent layouts, and scheduling get me through most of my days.”

Whiting said what sets Undercover Tents apart is its careful listening to clients and its thoughtful tailoring of offerings to the event at hand, whether a wedding or another special celebration.

“I think it’s that important attention-to-detail aspect that we bring to your event and planning,” Knapp said. “And I have definitely learned that many small details done correctly add up to one large successful event — something as simple as making sure the straps are tied back on each side pole, or making sure our sidewalls are straight and uniform. Doing our best to become a one-stop shop to help clients minimize their needed vendors on-site has been really important to us.”

Asked about their approach in nailing down the details for an event’s requirements, Knapp said, “For me, it’s logistics. How many people? Are there any site restrictions? How do we get our trucks in? As you can imagine a lot of planning for weddings happen during the winter months and when Erin is busy in the office emailing and taking phone calls I’m also out and about doing my best to evaluate sites. Even though there’s still snow on the ground, I can answer a lot of questions before a customer commits.”

For her part, Whiting added, “For me in the office, building a good relationship with the customer is always in the forefront of my mind. I don’t want anything to feel like it’s just a business transaction. We’ll spend months working together and it’s important to me that clients know I am here to help.”

According to Knapp and Whiting, 80% of their revenue comes from weddings. They are their “bread and butter.” Services range from a full day’s worth of events or helping with a rehearsal, ceremony, or another discrete part of the celebration.

“I think over the years we’ve just gotten good at it with providing excellent service and continuing to add to our inventory selection. Second in line would probably be corporate events, and other celebrations such as graduations, baby showers and celebrations of life,” Knapp said.

He added that impressing customers is one of the most rewarding aspects of Undercover Tents’ work.

“It’s really amazing how excited people can get with the work that we do for them. It’s generally a happy time and people are just so excited. Secondly, I would say seeing some absolutely beautiful places in Vermont. From beautiful farm meadows to high up on mountainsides, just some wonderful views.”

The service area for Undercover Tents includes New Hampshire and Vermont, said Knapp, saying, “We will consider anything in Vermont and New Hampshire. We have been as far north as Newport, Vermont, and Isle La Motte. Then south to Manchester, Vermont, Bennington, Vermont. We finished up last year in Marlboro, Vermont.”

Some local venues that Undercover Tents has worked with include Lake Morey Resort, Loch Lyme Lodge, Wild Sugar Homestead in

Newbury, Hanover Inn, and Woodstock Inn.

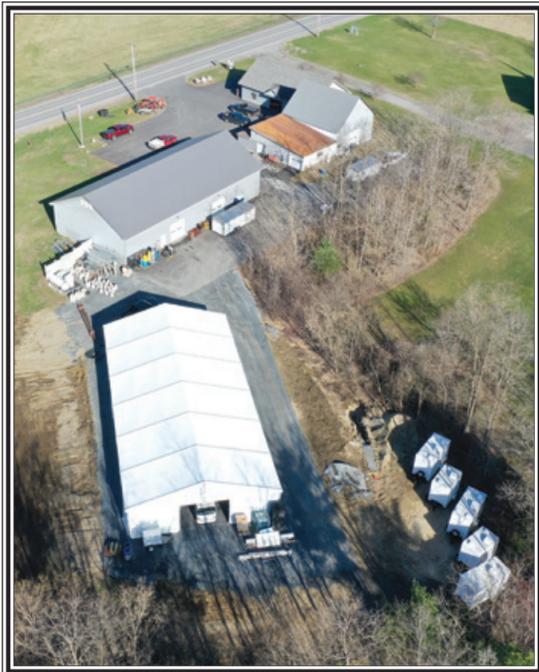
“But we also go much farther than that, some of our favorites also include Sterling Ridge Resort in Jefferson, Barnstead Inn in Manchester, Vermont, Basin Harbor in Vergennes, Vermont, Toad Hill Farm in Franconia and many more,” they said.

In terms of timelines for rentals, Knapp said, “We are generally booking up to two years out, but always recommend making contact at least a year out to best guarantee availability.”

Asked to share something people may not know about the work they do at Undercover Tents, Knapp said, “I think people don’t realize how much we accomplish here, lots of new customers think that we put everything up on Saturday mornings. I think people are unaware of the logistics behind all of it. I remember asking Erin one time ‘Do you think your friends realize how much we do here?’ She couldn’t say ‘No!’ quick enough!”

The motto that Knapp and Whiting like to use for Undercover Tents is “Uniquely Yours.”

To find out more about Undercover Tents in Bradford, visit their website at www.undercover-tents.com.



An aerial view of the Undercover Tents headquarters off Route 5 in Bradford. From there, the business serves everywhere in New Hampshire and Vermont.

COURTESY PHOTO

Stay tuned for the July Bridal Showcase in the *Journal Opinion*!



“We’ll spend months working together and it’s important to me that clients know I am here to help,” said Undercover Tents Manager and Event Planner Erin Whiting (pictured).

COURTESY PHOTO

• S&S

continued from page B2

shoots weddings for Sparks & Spoons.

Wendy’s two older daughters, Reegan and Kaylee, also help out with the business. Reegan designs vinyl signage and Kaylee bartends.

Sparks & Spoons also provides an extensive array of rentals for events including weddings and David can custom-build items, as well.

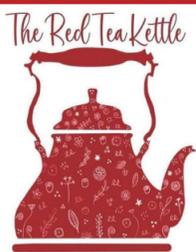
They understand the costs add up quickly.

“One of the things we always tell our couples is we know how

expensive weddings are, and we offer tips and tricks to try to save money. And if they’re on a tight budget, we make recommendations, as well. We find out what couples’ needs are and work within their means and where they need to be. That’s really what a good coordinator does.”

Couples in the Haverhill area are offered a 10% discount on packages.

To find out more about Sparks & Spoons, visit sparksandspoons.com/.



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• Venues

continued from page B2

wedding, we can make those dreams come true at Ogontz.”

Customizable lakeside events are available for events and special celebrations at the Ogontz.

To learn more about having your wedding at Ogontz, visit their website at: ogontzwhitemountains.com/weddings.

The Old Scott Barn, Groton

On the Vermont side of the river, there is also a lovely rustic barn option for wedding venues.

The Old Scott Barn is an 1800s restored barn whose owners have gone to lengths to keep its original dairy barn features, their website states.

“The upstairs hay loft has a spectacular view of Signal Mountain which you will enjoy as you dance on the new wood floors beneath the old hay trolley above you,” shares the Old Scott Barn website. “When you descend the wrap-around staircase and enter the old milking parlor downstairs, you will see a stunning 30-foot live edge wood bar and new 20” wide

pine flooring nestled in among the old cow stanchions and milking hardware.”

The Old Scott Barn has been hosting weddings since 2019 and has hosted weddings that range from rustic to elegant and everything in-between, they said.

“Our historic post and beam barn has two large levels and is situated on 100 pristine acres.”

Dating to 1793, the barn’s original grandeur has been kept intact, the owners share. The barn is set on a 100-acre property and receptions are held in the second-floor hayloft with mountain views.

On the barn’s first floor is the Milk House Pub with a 30-foot live edge wood bar and the charm of the old barn preserved including old cow stanchions and milking hardware; the pub is winterized and available for smaller winter weddings and parties.

Owner Martin Klein bought the property in 2014 and wanted to save the dairy barn he shares on his website. He sought and secured a preservation grant through the State of Vermont

and “undertook the restoration with the idea of serving the community and others by offering the barn as an event venue to host memorable celebrations,” he shared in the email he sends to prospective couples and others inquiring about The Old Scott Barn. The upstairs can seat over 150 guests.

To find out more about hosting your wedding event at The Old Scott Barn, visit www.oldscttobarn.com.

Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee

A venue also set in the mountains, but on the Vermont side of the Connecticut River, which can accommodate up to 300 guests is the Lake Morey Resort, a full-service property on Lake Morey which specializes in weddings “as unique and distinct as you,” their website offers.

“We have been hosting couples and their families for three generations — it’s a family affair,” the Avery family states on the Lake Morey Resort website. “Over our 50 years, we have cultivated and designed a variety of lakefront



A wedding dress is incorporated into the entrance scene for a celebration at Jeffers Hill Farm in Pike.

COURTESY PHOTO BY DAN FARRELL PHOTOGRAPHY

event rooms, spectacular lakeside and garden outdoor spaces, freshly appointed guest rooms, classically trained chefs, and professional service and bar staff; all awaiting to make your day exceptional.”

To learn more about hosting a wedding at the Lake Morey Resort, visit www.lakemoreyresort.com/weddings/weddings-overview/.

