

## The details count for Toms River businesswoman

Written by Kathi R. Evans

### Event planning is her passion

Event planning is something I was born to do. It's my passion.

When I was a student at Brookwood Elementary School in Jackson, the teachers gave me the honor of creating the seasonal bulletin boards. In high school, I helped to organize the first ever Ocean County majorette competition at what was then the Ocean Ice Palace in Brick. After graduating from Montclair State College in 1976, I entered the field of women's gymnastics as a coach and judge and was the meet director for some of the largest private club gymnastics meets in the state.

After 15 years in gymnastics, I left for a part-time office job that led to a full-time job when my children grew older. I was the marketing and communications supervisor for the U.S. office of a European company. The office was located in the Lakewood Industrial Park. I was responsible for all the company trade shows and sales meetings. I got to travel all over the United States and visited our parent company in

Liechtenstein twice.

I thought this was my dream job, but after 15 years, the dream came to an end and I left that job to start my own company – All the Best Weddings & Celebrations LLC – in February 2005.

I knew there was a need for a wedding and event planner that did more than just design the flowers. Planning a wedding is very detail-oriented and that's my strong point. I was fortunate to start advertising on [theknot.com](http://www.theknot.com) just as it was getting a big boost from the first season of Donald Trump's "The Apprentice" TV show. I had my first client before completely leaving my full-time job.

But the recession was about to take its toll. As 2008 was coming to an end, my 2009 bookings were down 90 percent from the same time the year before. Instead of panicking, I contacted some of the professionals that I'd worked with in the past and formed strategic partnerships. These partnerships bring a high level of value to our clients through add-



**Kathi R. Evans works as an event planner out of her Toms River home. / STAFF PHOTO: TOM SPADER**

ons and discounts that they wouldn't get if they contacted these same professionals on their own.

To keep business expenses down I work from home and advertise sparingly online and in print co-op ads with the New Jersey branch of the Association of Bridal Consultants. The initial consultation is complimentary and carries no obligation and is done at the convenience of the clients.

In the beginning, I did it all by myself, but now I have seven part-time trusted team members so that we can take on any size or type of event – large, small, tented, indoor, corporate, social or nonprofit. My goal is take on only one full-service event per weekend, but with my expanded team we can take on an additional day of event clients. While my geographic comfort zone is Monmouth and Ocean counties, we do go all over the state.

I continue to look for ways to help our clients keep costs down while keeping the stress out of event planning because planning your event should be a piece of cake.

Kathi R. Evans runs All the Best Weddings & Celebrations (<http://www.atbcelebrations.com>). Getting Ahead runs Sundays. If you are a businesswoman interested in writing about your career, please send your story to Business Editor Dennis P. Carmody at [dcarmody@app.com](mailto:dcarmody@app.com)