

FEATURE

Festival attendees marry on the beach

Anna Maria Island Sun News Story

By Tom Vaught | sun staff writer

ANNA MARIA – Carrie Cerini and Eric Harter, of Bradenton, took their vows at the Sandbar restaurant last Friday in a wedding that they planned with some help from the Wedding Festival help of this year's wedding festival.

The couple that has been together for more than four years and own a house in Bradenton, attended the festival last February and really enjoyed it, according to Cerini.

"I thought it was excellent and it was run perfectly," she said. "We loved riding the limousines to all the locations. It was a fun day."

She said they found some of the vendors for their wedding at the festival.

"I think that at that point, we already had the Sandbar picked out, but not all of the vendors," she said "We chose Flower Girls for our flowers, Body and Sol, Silver Videos and Harrington House.

"We got out of the limousine and walked onto the property at the Harrington House and fell in love with that old Florida feeling," she added. "We're both from Michigan, so we knew the lore of the ocean and the beach would be a big part of our wedding."

Debbie Lemieux, of Flower Girls, remembers her first contact from Carrie after the festival, which ended with a mock wedding at the Sandbar restaurant.

"I still have the e-mail she sent the day after that said she loved us at the mock wedding and had to have us for her wedding," Lemieux said. "Within three e-mails, we had a proposal and designed the flowers for her wedding over the computer."

Lemieux said that each bridesmaid at the wedding wanted a different design and that what they matched the flowers to each design.

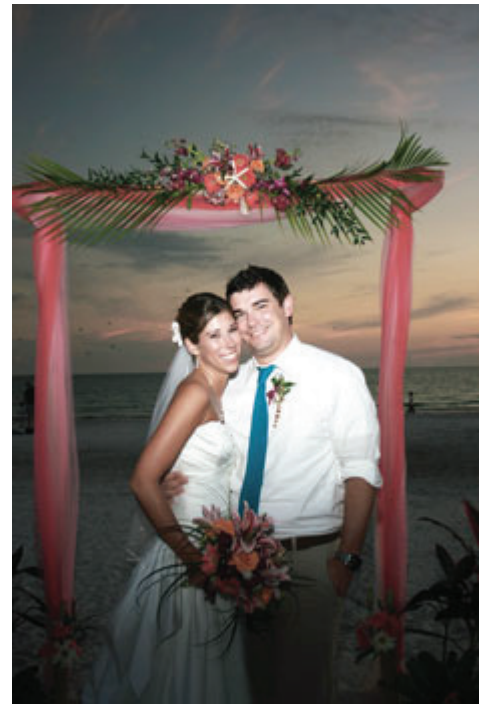
Caryn Hodge, marketing director for the Chiles Group, which owns the Sandbar, is a member of the Chamber's Wedding Group, which is organizing the next festival to be held on Sunday, Feb. 28, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. She said that the first two festivals were very successful in bringing weddings and tourists to the Island.

"It lets people know about our Island and what it has to offer," she said. The weddings bring people new to the Island and they come back as tourists."

For more information on the next Anna Maria Island Chamber of Commerce Wedding Festival, log onto www.amiweddingfestival.com.

Cerini said she felt that the wedding festival was very helpful and they enjoyed the map that showed where all the vendors were located. Asked if they might attend next year's wedding festival, she wasn't sure.

"I'm going to miss looking at all the wedding stuff now that we don't need to," she said. "We might not come to another wedding festival but I know we'll come back to the Island. We love it here."



PHOTO/THE FLOWER GIRLS OF SARASOTA
Carrie Cerini and Eric Harter wed at the Sandbar last Friday.