

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman in formal attire sharing a kiss. They are positioned behind a gold-colored ornate metal railing. The background consists of vertical striped curtains.

WINDY
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TIMES

LGBTQ

Wedding Guide

SIXTH EDITION
Fall 2016

SHE SAID 'YES'

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COVER PHOTO

Chicago-based transgender activists Myles Brady (left) and Precious Davis, advocates for the rights of all LGBTQs. Their wedding is August 2016.

*Photo by Korto Photography
Hair and Makeup by Kim Cleveland*



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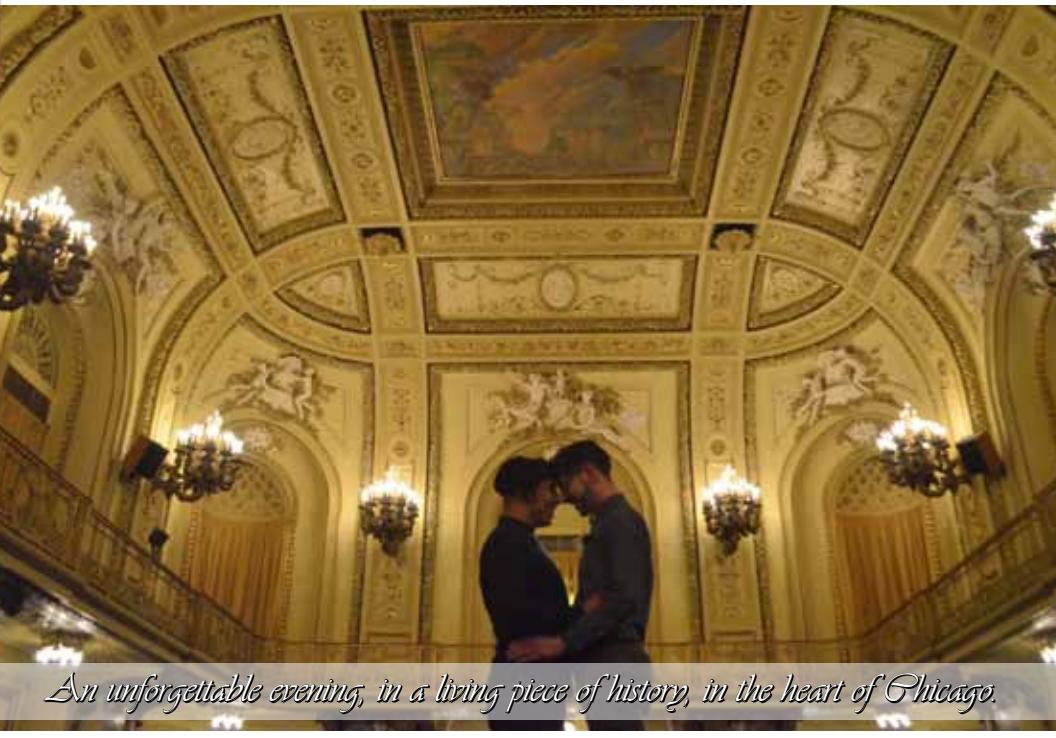
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We asked readers to send in photos of their weddings to share with the community. What we received was a collection of beautiful stories of love and commitment.
All photos courtesy of subjects except where otherwise indicated.



After 15 years of being together and 10 years of raising Cole and Parker, **Mark Kibby** (left in top photo) and **Erik Sosa** were married in Kenosha, Wisconsin recently. The Sosa-Kibby family is now officially recognized as a family.



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FRANKLY SPEAKING ...

Tips from Chicago's only Master Wedding Planner



BY FRANK J. ANDONOPLAS , MBC

Planning a wedding can be a very stressful and time-consuming time of your life. Here are some helpful tips for those planning your own wedding that I have found to be helpful in my 24 years of designing, detailing and managing weddings.

-Hotel blocks for guests: Make sure you use a hotel that does not have an attrition clause. You can't control where your guests will stay, as many are hotel brand loyal. This way, you are not contractually obligated to sell all the rooms in your block. Any unsold rooms will be released to the general public one month before your wedding. Also, a few weeks before your block cut-off date, request a rooming list so you can review it and make sure that if any key out-of-town guests haven't reserved, check in with them and remind them they only have a few weeks left.

-RSVPs: I actually number the guest list, and then write that number on the back of the RSVP card. It will speed up the process of recording that RSVP when it comes back. Also, it saves you when you can't read the handwriting of the guest or they forget to put their name on the RSVP (oh, yes this happens); you will know who it is. Many don't even use a return address, which is also remedied by this method.

-Seating: Most of the time, you will assign guests to tables via escort card and sometimes which seat at the table via place card. This process always seems to take longer than anticipated.

Realize that some will not be happy with their table assignments and with whom they are sitting. Guests need to respect that you, as the host/hostess of the event, have sat them at a specific table for a specific reason. It's only 90 minutes or so, and they should be able to sit elsewhere after dinner (or lunch or brunch) is completed. Additionally, if you are offering a pre-selected choice of entrée (on the RSVP card), you should "code" the top of the place card so the wait staff know which entrée that guest selected so they don't have to ask. Most guests forget anyway. If you are not doing formal seating, I suggest reserving a few tables for family. This way, Grandma knows where to put her purse.

-Floral: Try to repurpose everything from the ceremony at the reception. It will save a lot of money. Whether it's moving floral arrangements from the church altar to the reception entrance or on each side of your head table or orchestra, or using your centerpieces to create an aisle at the same ceremony venue, you will save money by reusing these florals.

-Transportation: To save money, try to charter one larger vehicle instead of many smaller ones. Not only will it save you money, it will keep everyone together, especially when you are trying to get photos done in a few hours between ceremony and reception.

Lastly, if you are not using a wedding consultant or planner to assist you with the whole wedding, consider hiring a wedding pro to assist on a limited basis. I offer an option of a

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IT'S SIMPLY THE 'DRESS'

Chicagoan Precious Davis hits reality TV in preparation for her wedding

Precious Davis (right) in *Say Yes to the Dress*.
Photo from Discovery Communications

BY LIZ BAUDLER

Precious Davis is having a moment: Last year she got engaged to fiance Myles Brady and to start 2016, the trans professional, activist and performer appeared on TLC's *Say Yes to the Dress* on Wed., Jan. 13.

"It was a dream come true," said Davis. "Everyone was so comforting. The entire experience of filming it was everything that I thought it would be."

Davis said she and Brady fielded offers from other shows looking to tell their love story, and found TLC to be the most authentic platform. "Other reality series wanted to come in and objectify us, or create a storyline that wasn't there," Davis said. "And our integrity is most important to us, the authenticity of our story and what we represent."

Host Monte Durham gushed over Davis's personality, comparing her to champagne. "She has such a strong voice and presence, and she was just gracious. We had a ball with her," Durham said.

The feeling was mutual. "Monte became like a little fairy godmother to me and just was such a great guide in a way that I never thought would happen," Davis said. "We really clicked."

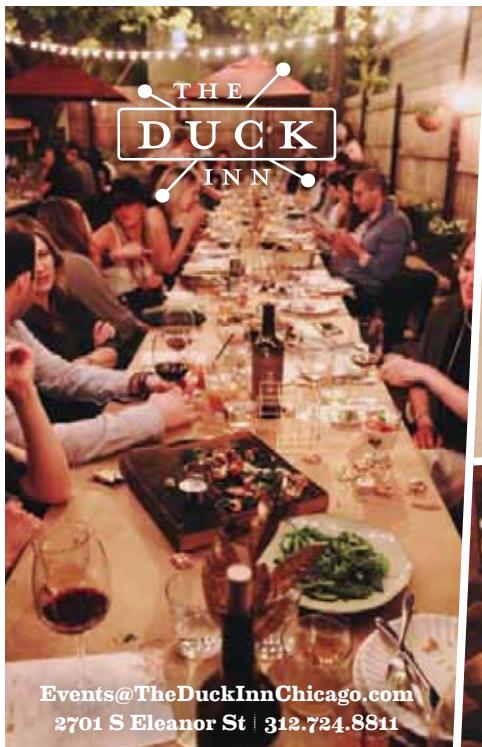
Initially, Davis, being used to dressing up, had ideas about what she would want. "I thought I was just looking for a dress, and what I didn't realize is that I was looking for a very specific

kind of dress," she remembered. "I wasn't just looking for a dress. I was looking for a wedding dress. And I didn't realize what a wedding dress looks like, and what it feels like when you put it on. That was a surprise for me."

Both Davis and Durham were fully aware of the powerful nature of Precious's appearance. "I think that love comes in many packages, and it's beyond the continuum of the binary gender in itself," Davis remarked. "You have these stereotypical notions of what a relationship looks like, and I think Myles and I really redefine that in a different package."

"The average life expectancy of a trans woman in the United States is less than 30 years old. I just turned 30 this year and I'll be getting married," Davis continued. "I think that we represent hope and light. We are another narrative, to show that love is possible and that we are trans people. We have hopes, we have dreams, we want to be loved dearly, and we want our lives to have meaning."

She also felt the episode would show the importance of chosen family. Two close gay male friends who supported her during her transition appear in the show and will be men of honor at the wedding. "We're supporting each other across the lenses of identity," Davis said of their appearance. "I come from a tumultuous family experience, and not having my birth family but my chosen family stand in was a really powerful moment for me."



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PLANNER/ALLY

Wedding planner educated in LGBT community and events by her father



BY GRETCHEN RACHEL HAMMOND

As the owner and lead planner of the eight-year-old boutique wedding planning service Clover Events, and as an event planner for over a decade, Katherine Healy Brown knows the industry inside and out.

The same can be said about her knowledge of the LGBTQ community.

"My dad, John, came out when I was in high school," said Brown. "We came from a Catholic background, so it was a bit of a shock and it took a little adjustment but, for that reason, the LGBT community has been part of my life and upbringing."

The initial surprise Brown felt has long since turned into unrelenting admiration.

"I give my dad so much credit," she said. "He made such a courageous choice. He had five kids and a business and he completely upended his life because he wanted to be true to himself. I think that's incredible."

As her father is owner of his own public relations firm and is heavily involved in the LGBT community, Brown also got an early education in the mechanics of putting together a variety of successful events.

"There were plenty of parties," she said. "It's part of why I love what I do."

Brown recalled being a part of the planning team for a mass wedding called Under a New Moon, which took place shortly after the Obergefell v. Hodges decision, making same-sex marriage legal nationwide.

"An officiant named Anita Vaughn wanted to do a wedding ceremony and party for six couples," she said. "The wedding ceremony was at midnight and the party went into the wee hours of the morning. It was amazing to see all these couples of all ages who had been committed together for different lengths of time finally be able to get married."

Brown began her own career planning corporate events.

"In 2009, I was looking to diversify my work and started working with a wedding planner," she said. "At first, I wasn't sure how I would feel about it, but I absolutely love it. To work with couples from start to finish and help them pull off their dream—it is incredible to see all of that come together."

Brown remembers two same-sex marriages which she planned with great fondness.

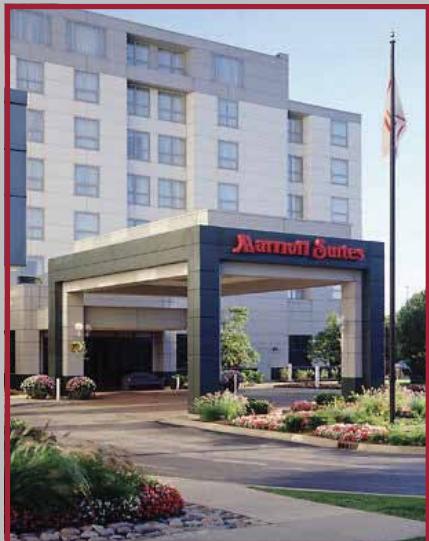
"I love seeing how two people getting married can be dressed similarly but their personalities come through," she said. "They are absolutely gorgeous."

Brown's work with her couples is as intensive



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BOOK REVIEW

Charity & Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America

by Rachel Hope Cleves
\$29.95; Oxford University Press; 267 pages

REVIEW BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

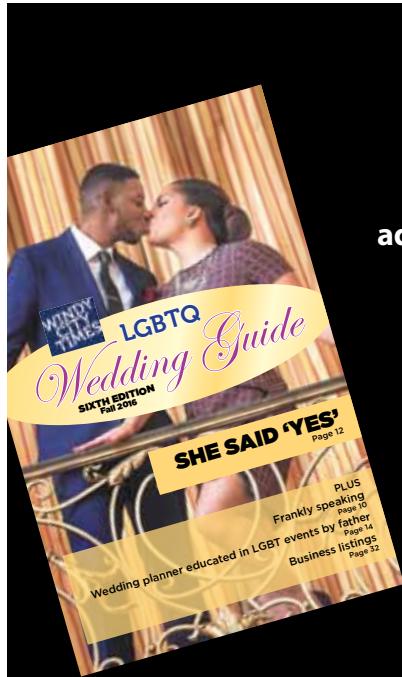
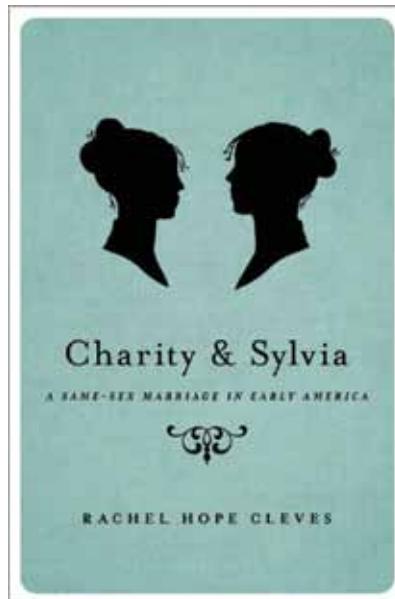
Sometimes, you wonder how Grandma coped.

For most (if not all) of her life, she lived without computer or cell phone. She made meals for her family without a microwave, sewed her own clothing, and enjoyed each of the four channels she got on her small-screen TV.

So how did she do it? Conveniences aside, was her life really all that different from yours? Or, as in the book *Charity & Sylvia*, by Rachel Hope Cleves, is everything old now new again?

Born in the midst of the American Revolution, Charity Bryant was destined from the outset to have an interesting life: she was a sickly infant birthed by a sickly mother who died days after Charity entered the world. Before she passed, though, Silence

turn to page 17



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BOOK REVIEW

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Bryant christened the baby after her spinster-sister, an act that may have "pointed [Charity] to a model of womanhood that differed significantly from her [mother's]."

Somewhat coddled by her elder siblings but despised by her stepmother, Charity grew with a "passion for making friends with other young women..." At this time, intimate "romantic relationships" among same-sex friends was lightly encouraged by parents and carefully watched—at least until the couple "gave reasons for concern."

And Charity wholeheartedly offered exactly that. She was "the cause of tensions in a number of communities" and, since she was a "mannish"-looking teacher of young women, was the victim of "vicious gossip" that kept her on the move. Girls, you see, had only recently been allowed an education, and their schools had reputations for an "erotic atmosphere."

It didn't help that Charity was a bit of a female rake, and left a string of broken hearts in the wake of her escapes. A renowned poet, and she and her amours filled stacks of letters with romance and steam, love and longing, though Charity seemed to want to remain footloose. She "believed in marriage, just not for herself."

But then, in 1807, while on the run from yet another sullied reputation, Charity left Massachusetts and moved to Vermont. There, she met Sylvia Drake, a relative of her hosts, and there was a "spark..."

Okay, so I have to admit that, with its teeny-tiny print and erudite look, I was expecting *Charity & Sylvia* to be dry as a dead creek bed. I'm likewise happy to admit I was dead wrong.

Starting with the birth of the woman on whom Cleves focuses most, this book opens with a slice of life during the Revolutionary War. We then move back and forth in narrative, but Cleves never lets us forget the time and space that her subjects inhabited, the social mores, the historical aspects, nor the seemingly inconsistent attitudes toward romance and sex that our forebears held and that which we've been led to believe they had. I found that deeply fascinating and highly entertaining.

I think that if you're a fan of history (LGBT or otherwise), this is something you'll relish. With chaste retelling and its abundant details, *Charity & Sylvia* is your grandmother's book—and yours, too.

Want more? Look for *Queer America*, by Vicki L. Eaklor; or *A Queer History of the United States*, by Michael Bronski.



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few hours to be your lifeline during the planning process. I make myself available to answer questions, give advice and make referrals to vendors. It can save you a lot of time, as well as saving you from making an expensive mistake. Also, think about hiring a wedding day director to be there to manage all the little details on the wedding day. This way, you and your family can relax and enjoy the most important day of your life.

Frank J. Andonoplas has designed social and corporate events all over the country since 1992. Frank is an active member of the Association of Bridal Consultants and is one of only 73 Master Wedding Consultants worldwide. Frank was named Event planner of the year in 2012. His expertise has been featured in wedding magazines on as well as local television segments in addition to the Early Show, and 20/20. For more information www.frankeventdesign.com

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PLANNER

from page 14

as it is personal. Sometimes, she can be planning with them for at least a year, handling every detail of the wedding.

"It really varies by client," she said. "Each couple comes to me at different points in their planning. Everything is customized because their needs are so different. For some people it's important to get a planner immediately after they get engaged because they don't know where to start. So I guide them through the process from beginning to end. Others will find me when they have a venue and need help with the vendors."

For Brown, no kind of wedding is out of the realm of possibility.

"My approach in wedding planning is very relationship-based," she said. "I don't take on a ton of weddings because I want to make sure I have a very personal one-on-one connection with my clients. I help them navigate through some challenging situations. I work with them to make their dreams come true. So, whether it's flowing gowns or leather, this is a judgment-free zone."

"That goes back to my relationship with my dad, which has informed my perspective on love and what love looks like," she added. "If someone throws something at me, we find a way to make it work. I want to celebrate the fact that these amazing couples are finally allowed to express their love for each other."

Brown leverages her long-standing and personal relationships with everyone she has worked, including an array of vendors across the city from caterers to videographers to DJs, orchestras and hotels.

She is able to look at a contract critically and work with a couple in negotiating the best price. However, if a vendor should ever refuse to offer service to a same-sex couple or a transgender individual, "I would walk away," Brown said. "I would never want to work with anyone who discriminates. I would be done with them. That kind of support level for my clients is essential. It's equally important that we have open lines of communication and that they trust me, because otherwise I can't do my job."

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Christina Wiesmore (right in top photo) and **Heather Roberts** were married May 28 in a rooftop ceremony at Lacuna Artist Lofts in Chicago. A reception in the Reverie Gallery immediately followed the beautiful skyline ceremony and featured entertainment by local band Catfight.

Wiesmore, a leader in the Chicago LGBTQ community, is co-founder of the popular women's pride event Back Lot Bash and also serves as a member of the board of the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association.

Roberts, who moved to Chicago three years ago, serves as legal counsel to Motorola Mobility and is a board member of StartOut Chicago and leader of the LGBT@Moto employee resource group.

The ceremony was officiated by Amie Klujian, Christina's business partner and close friend of both brides. Bridesmaids on Christina's side were Patricia Fukuda, Lisa Almaguer, Emily Hoskins and Monica Howe-Morin. Heather's bridesmaids were Courtney VanLonkhuyzen, Angela Daley Tideman, Chloe Willstrom and Trisha Van-Meter.

Photos by Michelle Lytle Photography.



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"No matter who you are, to stand up on that runway and be judged by your peers finding your perfect dress takes a lot of courage," Durham said. "Every bride goes through that. I think any time you can show anyone of any gender and sexual [orientation] in a positive light, it helps the community."

Durham, an out gay man, recalled his own commitment ceremony in 1992 and feels lucky to witness marriage equality. "It's like when you have children and you say, 'look at how I raised my daughter, look at her, there she is.' I'm like a proud daddy! It's just incredible to see this unfold in my lifetime and how lucky am I to see and experience and work for a company that not only embraces it but shares it, and that is rare," he said.

And as for the dress? No spoilers, but Durham said it's custom-designed by wedding dress maven Lazaro, and Davis called it fit for a queen. "Myles and I view ourselves as he the king and I the queen: a royal woman, a distinguished woman, a woman of power," she said. "[The dress] is, indeed, royal."

—Originally printed in the January 13, 2016, issue of *Windy City Times*.



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WEDDINGS *Sparkle* AT THE HILTON ORRINGTON



Photo: John Gress



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One year since marriage equality

The date of this year's Pride Parade—Sunday, June 26—also marked precisely one year since marriage equality became the law of the land in the United States.

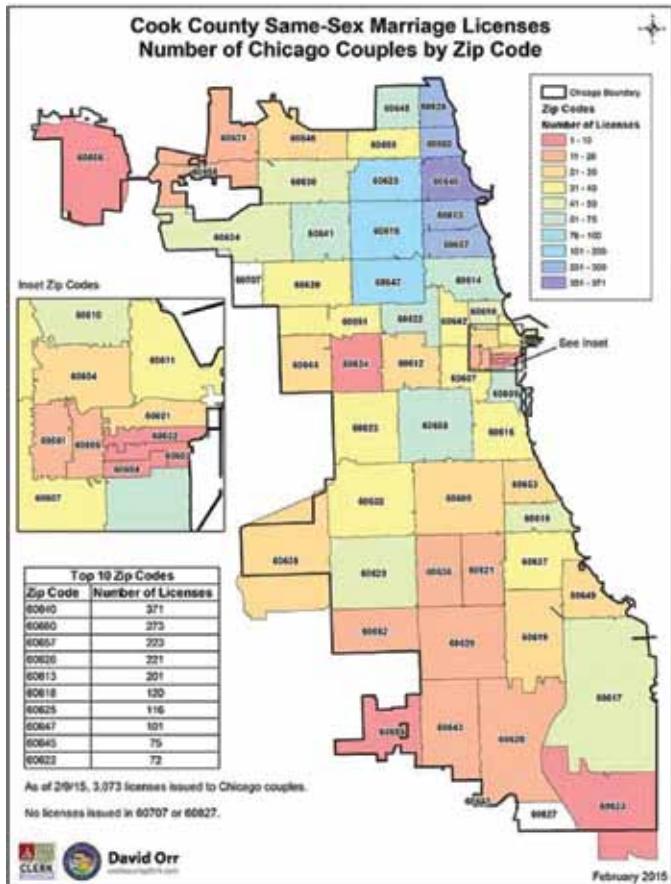
A February 2015 press release from the Cook County clerk's office showed that more than 6,500 same-sex couples were married in the county in the first year of marriage equality. On Feb. 21, 2014, a federal judge cleared the way for Clerk Orr to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples who planned to marry in Cook County—more than three months before marriage equality took effect throughout Illinois, and more than a year before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that state bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional.

By 2015, at least one license was issued to a couple residing in every Chicago zip code, except for two zip codes (60707 and 60827).

Currently, Cook County has issued approximately 9,600 marriage licenses to same-sex couples, according to James Scalzitti of the clerk's office. The proportion of male to female marriages have been 52 percent to 48 percent. The top zip code is 60640 (in Lake View), with 554 couples.

—Originally printed in the June 22, 2016, issue of *Windy City Times*.

Cook County marriage-equality map from 2015.
Graphic from Cook County clerk's office





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see also VENUES

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more on page 34

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A professional headshot of Audrey Gordon, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark top and a light-colored scarf. To her right is a stylized signature logo for "Audrey Gordon". Below the photo is the text "Empress of Schmooze" in a script font, followed by "Experienced Wedding Planner for your special day". Underneath that is "Resource Tank of people, places and things". At the bottom left is the phone number "312-504-3600" and the website "www.ag-parties.com" and email "audrey@ag-parties.com". At the bottom right is the text "Call me for a FREE ONE-HOUR CONSULTATION and let's get started making your special day one you'll always remember!"

The background features a colorful sunset over a city skyline. The word "dreamtown" is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a red heart symbol between "dream" and "town". Below it, the letters "lgbt" are also in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a smaller inset photo of a man with glasses and short hair, identified as Scott Ferguson. To the left of the inset photo, the text "Next step...The Home of Your Dreams!" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

VENUES

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