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simchas

Inviting Invitations

BY LINDA ESTERSON

Making a good impression affordably

First impressions are everlasting, but they don't have to be over-the-top expensive anymore. This is especially so when it comes to invitations for weddings, *b'nai mitzvah* and other *simchas*. Take Mr. Glassband and Didi Glassband who designed the invitation for son Ryan's *bar mitzvah* in 2009.

After ordering from an invitation book for son Matt's *bar mitzvah* and making daughter Aly's invitation an "art project," the Owings Mills couple went online and found different aspects they liked from others' invitations, and discussed wording for Ryan's. Then Mr. Glassband, a graphic designer by trade, designed his son's invitation to the delight of his wife and son.

The family e-mailed about 90 to 95 percent of the invitations, printing about 10 for relatives without e-mail addresses. Mr. Glassband says they e-mailed the invitation for a few

reasons — mostly to save money and save paper. They also had their guests respond back via e-mail, saving postage and more paper. "Everyone was excited and loved them," says Mr. Glassband. "It was a great idea."

Although some of the older generation expressed opposition, it was an educational experience for them to learn about technology and how it saves money. "It makes sense recycling and saving money," Mr. Glassband explains. "Figure out what you're going to save and put it toward something special."

Saving money and paper were also top of mind when Stephen Topel ordered invitations for daughter Rebecca's upcoming *bat mitzvah*. After pricing a package with a local designer for \$900, Mr. Topel followed the lead of his friend, Robin Libowitz, and ordered invitations online. Mr. Topel used Vista Print and with a coupon code paid just \$110 for

200 invitations, envelopes and separate postcards for the kids' party. He, too, is having his guests respond via e-mail or telephone for the November *simchah*.

"I felt a reasonable budget for invitations was \$200-\$250," he says. "I spent a lot more for (older daughter) Rachel's six years ago. That's when I had extra money. It wasn't an issue."

For son Brett's *bar mitzvah* 18 months ago, Robin Libowitz spent about \$250 for 200 invitations, thank-you notes, inner and outer envelopes, and kids' party postcards.

"I had used Vista Print for business cards and saw they did invitations, so I thought I'd try," she says. Ms. Libowitz was pleased with the multitude of design options, whether choosing an existing design on the website or being able to upload a design of her own.

Julie Kromsky chose to design her own invitation for daughter Melynda's *bat mitzvah* in March. After ordering from a store for her two sons prior *bar mitzvah*, she and Melynda started at the store but found that everything was "so plain or something we'd already seen before. She didn't like anything."

An invitation from a friend in Colorado arrived around the same time and both loved the concept. After showing it to a few invitation designers and getting quotes around \$3,000, Ms. Kromsky figured she could duplicate it herself for much less.

Ms. Kromsky, a fan of scrapbooking and crafts, had Melynda's portrait taken and priced paper stock online. After receiving samples, she selected a black card stock and a hot pink sheet which she trimmed to form a layered look. The photograph sat on top as a third layer, and it was covered by a frosted overlay with the invitation wording printing in hot pink. A silver ribbon tied it all together.

Admittedly a "lot of work," it was worth it in the end. The cost was about \$3 per set of invitation, inner and outer envelopes, response card and envelope, and thank-you notes and envelopes.

The response was overwhelming. "Several people saw it hanging in someone's house and asked how I did it," she says. "And people expressed interest having seen it."

Custom-designed invitations seem to be a trend, especially those including



Rachel Dorenfeld, owner of Kindly R.S.V.P. Designs

a pocket, notes Rachel Dorenfeld, owner of Kindly R.S.V.P. Designs. The pocket is included to hold all of the insert pieces. "The whole invitation is a pocket," Ms. Dorenfeld explains. "It's a more organized way of doing things."

Today, invitations are more modern, especially wedding invitations which previously were notably traditional. Brides often choose to match the wedding's color scheme, usually with two or three colors in the invitation, one being gold, cream or silver. They may also opt for a pattern either on the paper or added during the printing process. Much like Ms. Kromsky's design, today's bride is choosing to layer the wedding invitation with a stepped look, often including headings for each card.

Wedding invitations are still mailed, a process that is considered formal, Ms. Dorenfeld says, with response cards that are returned to the bride. Some use postcards instead of a card and envelope, however.

Ms. Dorenfeld's custom invitations range in price from \$7 to \$9 a set, including the invitation, three insert cards, envelope, liner, response envelope, addresses on the return envelope, as well as any rhinestones, ribbons and seals, and addressing the envelopes for mailing. In addition to the pockets, some brides are requesting seed paper, which their guests may plant in the ground after the wedding to grow flowers. Some also ask for recycled paper.

"Most want the best," notes Ms. Dorenfeld. "It is the first thing the guests see for the wedding and it makes a statement about the wedding and its feel." □

Linda Esterson is a local freelance writer.



Sample wedding invitations from Kindly R.S.V.P. Designs

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