

BURNSVILLE, N.C. — The third annual Burnsville Wedding Expo invites brides to meet vendors, ask questions and make plans for their big days, Saturday, Feb. 17.

The event at Burnsville Town Center highlights approximately 40 local vendors, including venues, planners, dress shops, menswear retailers, florists, stationers, caterers, jewelers, photographers, DJs, transportation companies and more.

This year, Asheville designer Charles Josef will create a wedding dress specifically for the expo. The well-known designer recently held a runway show during New York Fashion Week. Another new addition this year is a photo booth, where brides and couples can take a picture and see if it's an amenity they would like to include at their receptions.

A favorite returning activity gives 10 brides a chance to dig through a tiered wedding cake in search of a wedding band hidden inside. Whoever finds the band, donated by a local jeweler, gets to keep it. Other expo perks include goodie bags, door prizes and free samples.

"The expo helps people recognize the assets we have here that complement the area's natural beauty," says Chad Fox, Burnsville Town Center manager.

Burnsville and surrounding Blue Ridge Mountain communities have become popular for destination weddings, especially for couples who want a natural or rustic setting. The expo assists both local brides and those planning destination weddings in Western North Carolina.

"In Burnsville, we still have that small-town feel that a lot of people enjoy," Fox says. "The community is welcoming and inviting, and our local businesses and vendors are easy to talk to and more flexible to work with than some larger companies can be."

Although brides complete many aspects of wedding planning online or through email, face-to-face conversations remain important in this highly customizable industry.

"You can see all the pictures they post online, but when you meet someone in person, it makes a difference," says Amelia Hoilman, a local caterer and expo organizer.

Hours for the Burnsville Wedding Expo are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 17. Admission is \$5.

For additional details, visit www.BurnsvilleTownCenter.com or call (828) 682-7209.

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CONTACT:

Leah Hughes
leahchughes@gmail.com

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