

MEDINA COUNTY



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Give Your Wedding the Gift of a Professional Officiant

THE LITTLE DETAILS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Article by Valerie Hazlett

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You can feel it in the air — it's the holidays! Time for baking, pictures with Santa, singing carols and gift giving. Perhaps it is the magic and enchantment of the season, the love all around, which inspires holiday marriage proposals.

Before you know it, the ball drops and New Year's Eve bells ring. Let the wedding planning begin! There is a lot of work ahead finding the right professionals for your special day: venue, photographer, DJ. But when it comes to the officiant, will you think "Let's ask someone we

know?” What? No! Your special day deserves the expertise provided by those with experience, including a professional officiant, to work as part of your chosen team to make your wedding day exquisite.

I know because I am a local wedding officiant, established in beautiful Medina County.

My journey started when my cousin said, “I think you would make a great wedding officiant,” and asked me to perform her wedding ceremony. I wanted to do it right and got to work educating myself on the legal requirements in Ohio. I then researched how to complete and file a marriage license. Spoiler alert: it took a lot of time and inquiries.

Next up, scripting an actual ceremony, one I would present in front of a hundred people! Looking back, even after all the work, the first one was clunky (apologies to my cousin). However, I absolutely loved it! I found the stresses of the day melted away while writing and crafting scripts for such a joyous celebration. It came naturally and I have been doing weddings ever since. Beyond writing, I adore the couples I meet and enjoy sharing in the excitement around their special day.

The wedding day is like a dance, with rhythm and timing. Managing this dance are the venue, DJ, photographer and yes, the wedding officiant. The ceremony is a small component with a big impact. That is why it is the only detail that gets rehearsed. Every solid wedding ceremony has flow and fluent transitions to keep guests engaged. Further, it should reflect the personalities of the couple and have a dash of humor sprinkled on top. People, especially the couple, will remember the tone and feeling of the ceremony. Plus, it sets the stage for the rest of the party!

Couples usually start by choosing a venue — the backdrop for the day. A beautiful arch of windows for charming pictures? Lake Erie with Ohio’s blue sky? Or perhaps a rustic theme? One of my favorite spaces is Amy’s Arbors, snuggled in the heart of Valley City. The Rustic Event Center, with indoor and outdoor options, has it all — from hosting the rehearsal through to the reception.

Amy and I remember a delightful country couple who requested a branding ceremony. The wedding was to take place inside, with the unity branding outside. As professionals, we understood the importance of a bride’s requests on her special day. Together we worked through logistics and “crowd management” and brought her vision to life.

The DJ is the master of ceremonies, the person who ensures the nuptials are clearly heard. Every DJ has their microphones, and the videographer may as well: wired, wireless, clip on and audio pack. The officiant manages all the microphones during the ceremony and holds the ceremony book. It can be a bit to juggle!

I have the experience of collaborating with DJs to ensure wiring is hidden and the acoustics are unclouded and crisp. No shuffling of microphones, papers or audio packs during the ceremony! Guests (and your wedding videographer) will appreciate clear audio presented by a skilled public speaker.

The officiant and photographer work side-by-side to create quality photos from the ceremony. I've soaked up pointers from various photographers. Each one has unique tips from processional pauses, hand placement during ring exchange, centering couples and granting them the proper timing to get images of the pronouncement, first kiss and presentation.

In return, I share with the photographer special moments to capture. Understanding when to step out of the way is also important. An officiant doesn't need to be present in the romantic first kiss photo!

As you seek out competent and experienced professionals to cater food, take photos, handle audio and get your guests onto the dance floor, also trust the wedding officiating to a professional – Vows by Valerie. The little details make a big difference.

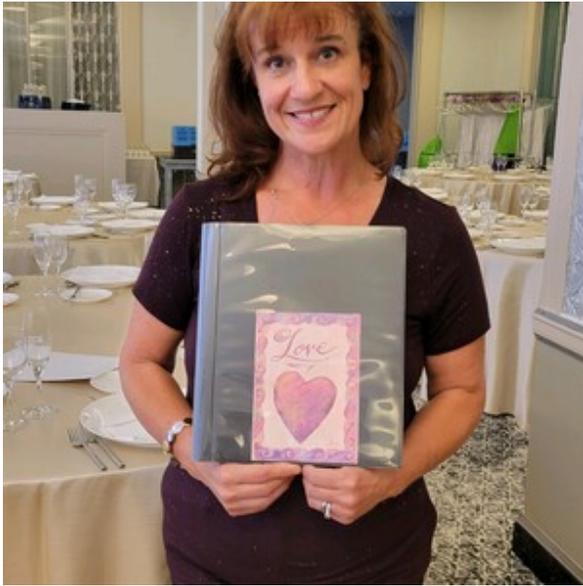
Check out these kind words from one of my recent brides:

"I wanted to say thank you so much for your beautiful ceremony! The ceremony was so personalized, that several people thought that you were a close family friend. Thank you so much again, you were truly one of the best parts of our wedding experience!" — Sarah Seide, October 2023 bride

If the holiday season graces you with an engagement, I propose to be considered as your officiant. Visit VowsByValerie.com to learn more about me or meet me at Amy's Arbors Bridal Open house on February 17 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Looking for a more intimate or smaller wedding celebration, consider a micro-ceremony. I'll be talking more about that in the February issue.

"The ceremony was so personalized, that several people thought [Valerie was] a close family friend."



1 / 5

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