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**EQUALITY ILLINOIS GUIDE FOR SAME-SEX WEDDINGS ANSWERS NEED
LGBT Nuptials Create Economic Opportunity for State**

CHICAGO—With some 23,000 same-sex households and thousands more LGBT couples in Illinois, the new Equality Illinois 2012 Same Sex Wedding Planning Guide provides the resources increasingly in demand to plan for the special day.

Weddings for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community are a multimillion-dollar business opportunity in Illinois, but, like all weddings, the ceremonies and celebrations require numerous decisions by the couples.

“We don’t want the stress of logistics to get in the way of the joy of the celebration. We’ve compiled a guide that features businesses that have been affiliated with and supportive of the LGBT community,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization.

The guide can be viewed, downloaded and printed at <http://bit.ly/LQIBTh> and is available in booklet form in many of the listed establishments. Listings include, hotels, wedding planners, bakeries, florists, caterers, entertainment, photographers, stationers, honeymoon destinations, and tuxedo and dress shops.

In addition to the listings, the guide includes legal information about getting a civil union and listings and links to clergy and houses of worship that will perform the ceremony.

“More than a typical business listing, this is an affirming and necessary document for LGBT couples. We want to direct them to businesses and institutions that honor the loving commitment the couples are ready to publicly declare,” Cherkasov said.

LGBT weddings are a growing economic opportunity. According to a report earlier this year by the Williams Institute, a UCLA think tank, weddings by Illinois residents alone would generate between \$39 million and \$72 million for the state economy over three years.

The economic benefits don't stop there, according to the report. These couples would also generate \$4.5 million to \$8 million in new sales and lodging tax revenues.

“We encourage more businesses to reach out to the growing LGBT embrace of traditional weddings. It’s good for business, and the right thing to do,” Cherkasov said.

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