

# LWRI Life

style, nature, community



ushering in the season



# Birthday Extremes

to Philanthropic Dreams

Parents are becoming creative these days. It's parental instinct to want to do more—and do better—for their children.

The "good old days" of pin the tail on the donkey with a few friends and family are being replaced by unconventional parties held at unique venues.

BY TINA PARADISSIS-WAGNER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EVAN EKASALA

# The Extravagant Party

Keren Shani-Lifrak, co-owner of local Rambunctious Productions, Inc. says that as more people come to Sarasota and Lakewood Ranch from Metropolitan cities—such as New York the Hamptons and Boston—they are sometime willing to spend money on a birthday party what would be equivalent of what one would spend on a wedding.

Shani-Lifrak and partner Molly Demeulenaere plan a variety of events in the Sarasota-Bradenton area as well as New York City.

Over the past year Shani-Lifrak said her company planned children's parties ranging from an average of \$2,000 to as much as \$13,000. She says her clients are allotting larger budgets for items such as sculptured flowers, talking invitation and unusual cakes.

“We are noticing that people want to spend more on custom made items that will make their party unique and interactive. People also want their guests to have a fun time beyond (enjoying) the food and cake” says Shani-Lifrak.

A good example was the over-the-top party she and partner Demeulenaere planned at the Madame Tussands Wax Museum in New York City that cost \$30,000. More than 200 people attended the 11-year-old's 1970's flower child-themed birthday party. Decorations for the party were fairly involved and included Italian designer Emilio Pucci's fabric prints, used for draping windows, walls and tables. Gerbera flower arrangements and psychedelic-colored beads strung from the ceiling and doorways.

Shani-Lifrak admits: “The people who hire us usually seek us because they are looking to do something special, out of the box, rather than a cookie-cutter birthday party.” She feels that with all sorts of magazines and reality shows, there's competition among the older kids—keeping up with fashion trends, having the coolest cell phone, and having the best party. We thank MTV's hit reality television show “My Super Sweet Sixteen” for that.

It's not only the kids buying into this trend. Their parents can play a huge role as well. The familiar phrase “keeping up with the Jones'” summarizes it all. Some people have the money to spend—and want to have fun with it—simple as that.