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Gay weddings mean big business

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Headquarters : Boston and N.Y.

Bernadette Smith started her wedding planning business in 2004 shortly after gay marriage was legalized in Massachusetts.

In the beginning, she called it It's About Time. Later she called it 14 Stories, because "14 is a powerful number in civil rights history," she says on her website.

"It was the number of individual plaintiffs in the case that first legalized gay marriage in Massachusetts. 14 is the U.S. Constitutional Amendment that was used to dismantle segregation and end the ban on interracial marriage."

Smith works with couples from all over the country, planning weddings in states where they are legal.

The wedding planner said she understands the subtleties of the gay wedding market in a way that regular wedding planners don't.

"People who hire us are looking for someone who is going to do everything to make sure they have a safe process," said Smith.

That means everything from working with gay-friendly vendors who won't ask 'where is the bride?' to two men who are getting married, to understanding complicated family matters.

Smith, who is in the process of opening a location in New York, said the recent legalization of gay marriage in the state is going to help her company's bottom line.

Most of Smith's business has been in Boston. But now that the Big Apple is an option, Beantown might see a bit less same-sex marriage business, Smith said. "I really think they are going to prefer New York just because the gay tourism in New York is huge," she said.



PHOTO: CLOSED CIRCLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Claire and Meg DeMarco's wedding was coordinated by Bernadette Smith.

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