

A photograph of a man and a woman embracing. The man is on the left, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, with his arms around the woman. The woman is on the right, wearing a blue sweater and blue jeans, looking towards the man. They are standing in front of a dark wooden archway. To the left of the archway, there are green ivy leaves and a string of white lights. The background is a dark wooden wall.

Congratulations
Traci Strawbridge & Richard Overstreet

*Our Dream
Wedding
Couple*

Meet the deserving couple that won
our Delaware Beach Dream Wedding.

by Carol Frank



An Essay Of Love and Determination

The winning essay—penned by Traci's parents Judy and Richard, along with Traci's former hockey coach Linda Saubier and her husband Leo—told of the lovely courtship of a Baltimore firefighter and a nursing home attendant who met through friends in a karaoke bar in 2004. Their relationship blossomed into a love affair when it was rekindled one year later and eventually led to a very romantic marriage proposal and the joyous selection of September, 2007 as their wedding date.

However, fate had something dreadful in store for this couple. On March 22, 2007, Richard was involved in a horrible motorcycle accident that nearly ended his life. The essay went on to detail the couple's consequent struggles—his inability to work; long months of intense, painful physical therapy; mounting medical bills, etc.—and their determination to not let anything bad come between them. It ended with a description of the couple's heartbreaking decision to forego the September wedding they had so desperately wanted to share with their family and friends.

A Plan From Above

Though their wedding had to be cancelled, nothing was going to keep them from getting married. Traci and Richard got their marriage license and set August 3 as the new date for a small, no-frills civil ceremony at a local courthouse.

"We were that close. It was literally the day before we were going to the courthouse that Nancy Joseph called to tell us we'd won", Richard now marvels.

The vote was almost unanimous. The selection committee had chosen Strawbridge and Overstreet to receive the totally expense-free Delaware Beach Dream Wedding, complete with a first class reception for 100 family and friends.

"Wow!" The bride and groom still can't grasp it, "We both just sat there saying 'I can't believe we won'. I still can't believe it!" Traci says. "It took a long time to set in that it was actually true." She adds that when a reporter from their hometown newspaper wrote about their win they've felt like local celebrities.

Among their many early well-wishers was Rebecca Sewald, a reporter for the Cecil County Whig newspaper. When she heard about a local couple winning a Delaware Beach Dream Wedding she contacted them.

"When we first heard Traci and Richard's story we thought maybe it was all too good to be true. You hear about stories like this in the movies, but they don't typically hit so close to home, so it was exciting to be able to share their their good fortune with our local readers.

"When I had the opportunity to sit down and talk with the couple, it was obvious that they'd faced a lot of struggles with Richard's recovery and the issues it created for continuing their original wedding plans. Through the Dream Wedding, they've been given an opportunity to turn a tragic event into something really positive that they'll always remember." ➤

Creating A Reality

The wedding that's being planned is as uniquely individual as the bride and groom. For the vendors, meeting Richard and Traci for the first time was both an inspirational and special time.



"They really deserve this Dream Wedding. It was easy to see the love they share shining right through their smiles", remarks Casey Ann Kieffer, of Make My Day Event Planning. "Both Leanne and I feel lucky and blessed to have the opportunity to guide such a deserving couple through their planning process!"

Co-coordinator Leanne Silicato really couldn't agree more. "At our first planning session, we talked with them about their wedding wishes, hopes and dreams. We also told them how we're looking forward to working with the many local vendors onboard who are helping to make their wedding dream come true."

After the Java Beach meeting, the couple, along with Traci's mother, toured the ceremony and reception site at Nassau Valley Vineyard just outside of Lewes. Sarah Greene of Greene Photography was there to document the occasion.

"What a treat seeing a couple so thrilled. They're totally in love, and so touchingly comfortable with each other. It really shows in the photos. Photographs capture people differently than the average eye can see. I've photographed a lot of couples—these two people really love each other. It just shows." Greene is looking forward to an upcoming 'pre-wedding provocative' photo session with Traci, and teases "we have some fun surprises in store for Richard!"

L-R: Nancy Joseph, DBW Publisher; Leanne Silicato and Casey Kieffer, Make My Day; Suzette Hopkins, Nassau Valley Vineyard; Richard Overstreet and Traci Strawbridge.

About the tour, the future bride says, "We loved Nassau Valley. It is totally us. As soon as we started driving up the lane we started smiling and decided immediately we wanted not only the reception at the Vineyard, but the wedding as well. Its rustic, old-school style—without a doubt it's the perfect place for us to be ourselves and take our vows."

Plans call for an afternoon affair at the Vineyard on March 22, 2008—the anniversary of Richard's motorcycle accident. "We want to replace that date's horrible significance with something precious and beautiful", Richard says.

If the vendors have their way, a beautiful day it will be. A beachy theme. Ivory with color accents of aquamarine, dark brown and a touch of sea green. Beyond that, most of the details are a well kept secret. "Guests will witness the bride and groom exchanging their own, handwritten vows in the intimacy of 'Gallery One'. Immediately afterward, there will be a fantastic reception in the adjacent 'Claret Hall'—complete with entertainment, dancing, catered food and beverages. It's supposed to be a totally stress-free affair for them. We're honoring their general requests and preferences, but the idea is for Traci and Richard to be totally surprised with what they see," Silicato explains.

And, that's fine with Traci. "This wedding is a blessing. We couldn't be more excited about it. I just want to say thanks to everyone for making this opportunity available to us. I think it's finally starting to sink in that this is really happening. Thank you for making this wedding possible."