

style in the southwest

Events by Show Stoppers dazzles bridal, corporate event and party clients in Sedona, Ariz., and beyond.

BY KELSEY E. SMITH



During a time when a staggering number of florists are experiencing flat or decreased sales, **EVENTS BY SHOW STOPPERS** in Sedona, Ariz., is growing, reports **JIM BULLOCK**, who owns the full-service event-decorating company with **KEN HEFLIN**. In part thanks to its affiliation with **THE SEDONA WEDDING STUDIO**, a group of 75 wedding and event professionals (see profile beginning on Page 59), and in part thanks to unique floral offerings such as the grand rose-petal carpets for which the company is known, Events by Show Stoppers is poised to remain a top choice for brides in Sedona, Ariz., and its surrounding areas.

journey to the wedding business

Despite co-founding The Sedona Wedding Studio, Mr. Bullock admits that weddings were far from the partners' minds when they opened their first company, J. Browning Designs, in Houston, Texas, in 1974.

"We were doing gala events and fundraisers such as the opera ball and the ballet ball, and we started getting attention in Dallas," Mr. Bullock recalls. "Then one of the chairwomen for an event in Dallas said, 'My husband has this little oil company, and we go to this trade show, and his booth is just awful. Is there anything you can come and do to make it prettier?' So we went to this oil show and redesigned his booth, and all these other oil companies asked us to design their booths for the following year. It snowballed, and in 1984, we opened Show Stoppers as a side busi-

An intricate rose-petal carpet adorns the aisle at the Chapel at Tlaquepaque. This image made the cover of *Arizona's Finest Wedding Sites and Services* magazine in September 2010. Set in the picturesque Tlaquepaque Arts and Crafts Village, the Chapel at Tlaquepaque is a favorite Sedona wedding venue.



(RIGHT) Featuring submerged golden barrel cacti and vividly colored tropical flowers, this grand pair of floral arrangements greeted guests at the 10th Anniversary Gala for *Phoenix Bride & Groom* in 2009.

(BELOW) Ken Heflin created this centerpiece for a photo shoot for *Phoenix Bride & Groom* using mounds of orange pincushions (*Leucospermums*), lavender stocks, golden *Cymbidium* orchids and deep red roses.



at a glance

events by show stoppers

OWNERS: Ken Heflin and Jim Bullock

LOCATION: Sedona, Ariz.

ESTABLISHED: 1984

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 5

BUSINESS SIZE: approximately 2,200 square feet, plus an off-site 2,000-square-foot studio for event work and prop storage

SPECIALTIES: full-service event decorating, including flowers and lighting; signature floral carpets

WEBSITE: www.eventsbyshowstoppers.com

well-rounded operation

Mr. Heflin is the principal designer, and Mr. Bullock handles the sales part of the business. Three additional employees each at Events by Show Stoppers and Nectar Design round out the company's permanent staff, along with freelance designers and other laborers as needed.

Events by Show Stoppers encompasses approximately 2,200 square feet of space, and the business has an off-site studio—a 2,000-square-foot renovated home—for its event work and prop storage. The kitchen was turned into the design room, and each of the former bedrooms has a distinct function, such as lighting or fabric. Storage units installed behind the home each hold a different wedding element, such as glassware. A storage facility in nearby Cottonwood, Ariz., holds the company's holiday décor.

See photos and learn about Events by Show Stoppers' dramatic floral carpets on Page 56.

ness. We did trade shows all over the country, and we worked in every major city."

Their love of the Southwest brought Mr. Heflin and Mr. Bullock to Sedona in 1998, where Events by Show Stoppers quickly became known. In 2009, the duo won the coveted "Best Event Décor 2009" award from the **INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL EVENTS SOCIETY (ISES)** Arizona chapter.

"We hit it right," Mr. Bullock says. "When we came here, Sedona was just becoming a resort town, and they had just built one of the big corporate venues, the Enchantment Resort. We called the Sedona International Film Festival, which was just beginning and was going to have its big gala at the Enchantment, and we volunteered to decorate it for free to get our name out there. Everybody in Sedona was there from all the other resorts, and we took off. We were doing only corporate events, but about four years ago, the corporate events business tanked. We had always avoided weddings, but we decided we'd better bite the bullet and start doing them. So, we created a website and created a monster. We started getting wedding work from everywhere, and it just built and built and built. We opened our storefront three years ago."

The duo opened a second business in Sedona, **NECTAR DESIGN**, in 2001. Offering floral services along with Native American gifts and jewelry, the shop is located at internationally renowned Tlaquepaque Arts & Crafts Village and is marketed as "Tlaquepaque's Official In-House Wedding Florist."

It's difficult to put a number on how many weddings Events by Show

Stoppers and Nectar Design handle each year, Mr. Bullock says, because they vary so greatly in scope, ranging from a simple \$100 package to a couple hundred-thousand dollars. Likewise, corporate events and private parties can range from product launches for 20 people to grand celebrity birthday parties.

At press time, Events by Show Stoppers was in the process of redesigning its website, www.eventsbyshowstoppers.com, to include a distinctive presence for each category—weddings and events.



This textural bouquet perfectly complemented the bride's color scheme of tangerine, hot pink and apple green.

dramatic arrivals

Although **EVENTS BY SHOW STOPPERS** offers a wide range of floral design styles and services, the business has become known for its floral carpets, which begin at approximately \$1,000. The carpets are most popular for weddings but also have been requested for fashion show runways and other event applications.

JIM BULLOCK says demand for the carpets "loosely doubles" each year, and the company has created 15 to 20 of them, in a variety of sizes and prices, over the past year. The most expensive, for a Hawaiian-themed wedding last spring, was \$4,000 and took approximately 16 hours to bring to fruition. Mr. Bullock, co-owner **KEN HEFLIN** and about five others laid the petals of 2,000 roses on the nearly 30-foot-long aisle inside the Royal Palms Resort and Spa in Scottsdale, Ariz., in a pattern representing the center of a *Heliconia* bloom (bottom).

Clean, defined edges and patterns set the company's floral carpets apart from other aisle treatments, Mr. Bullock shares. Most of the carpets are composed of rose petals, but he constantly seeks new things to use in the designs. "We use other flower types and organic materials for details as well as nonfloral elements such as feathers, chocolate hulls for fragrance, seeds and sand," he explains. "One carpet incorporated chocolate hulls for the matriarch of a famous family-owned chocolate empire who was celebrating her birthday. When guests entered the party area, the fragrance of chocolate was released as they walked across the carpet."

Although reminiscent of fine tapestries, the floral carpets are fluid and vulnerable to wind because no adhesive is used. Though clients are notified of this risk, Mr. Bullock says it has never been an issue. "It's amazing how well they stay together. The worst scenario, if it is really windy, is that we would take all the colors and mix them for an organic, loosely defined, dense rose aisle."

Mr. Bullock designs each carpet and presents it to the team for input. The drawing process can take several hours, and depending on the scope of the project, it can take from two to eight people to lay the petals. All materials for outdoor carpets are laid directly on the grass, with chalk and/or string often used as a guide for the patterns.

"Once the design is complete, we estimate the number of roses needed in all the specific colors, then charge accordingly and add labor (15 percent) for petaling, drawings, installation and clean-up," Mr. Bullock explains. "More variables come into play such as density and depth of the petal layer, size and number of petals each rose variety yields, contrast and color scheme."

Once the petals are removed from the roses, which can take several hours, logistics are important to ensure they remain in top condition. White petals require extra care to maintain their pristine appearance.

"You can't just put them all in a garbage bag, because the ones on the bottom will get creased because of the weight," Mr. Bullock explains. "We use dozens and dozens of buckets so the petals won't get crushed and turn brown."

Such attention to detail has made Events by Show Stoppers' floral carpets increasingly popular not only for brides but their guests as well. "Several times, people have scooped up the petals at the end and threw them up in the air for the bride and groom as they were walking through," Mr. Bullock shares. "We love those kinds of impulsive things people do, and so do the photographers." ■

(TOP LEFT) Created for the grand opening of Wildflower Linens in Scottsdale, Ariz., this floral carpet, designed by Jim Bullock, was inspired by a window design of American architect and interior designer Frank Lloyd Wright, who had a winter home in the area from 1937 until his death in 1959. The carpet served as a runway for models who playfully wore the company's linens as fashions.

(LEFT) Created using 2,000 rose petals, this floral carpet graced the aisle of a spring 2011 Hawaiian-themed wedding at the Royal Palms Resort and Spa in Scottsdale, Ariz. The labor-intensive carpet is the most expensive Events by Show Stoppers has created to date, billed at \$4,000.

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Photos courtesy of Sedona Bride Photographers

