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## 2007 EVENT PLANNERS OF THE YEAR

### Jennifer Grondahl



#### Maestro Marketing/Events

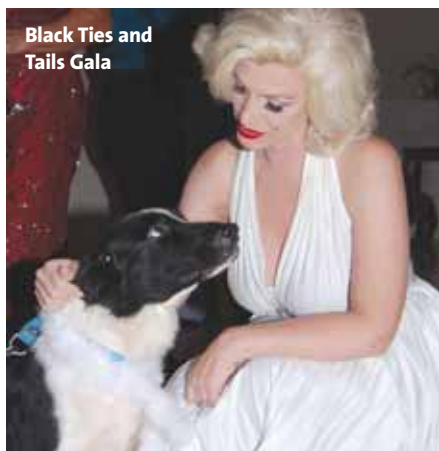
For many people, there just aren't enough hours in the day. For **JENNIFER GRONDAHL**, this is not the case. Not only does she put together extravagant events for many of Sarasota's top non-profit agencies, including the Humane Society, YMCA, and Rotary Club of Lakewood Ranch, she also manages to donate her time to help the community.

"I chair one or two events a year in the community as a volunteer for charitable causes and donate at least 10 hours a week in various roles to charities I support," she says.

Grondahl began her work with the Humane Society of Manatee County in the fall of 2006, when she was recruited to plan the annual walkathon fund-raiser Paws in Motion. In addition, she was also the planner for the society's inaugural and second annual Black Ties & Tails gala—an upscale event held at the Lakewood Ranch Country Club that raised more than \$88,000 its first year, according to Susanne Stovall, board member and chair for Paws in Motion.

Praised for her attention to detail, customer service, and never-faltering positive attitude, Grondahl is always looking for the next challenge.

"I'll choose a challenging and new project every time over doing the same thing over and over again, even if I was getting paid less," she says. "I thrive on the new!"



Black Ties and Tails Gala



### Heather Wilson

#### ME Productions

A certified special event professional since 2004, **HEATHER WILSON** has been working in the hospitality industry for more than seven years. Following her graduation from the University of Florida, she coordinated events for *Parents* magazine in New York and Art of the Party in Orlando before joining ME Productions in 2005. Since her start in the industry, Wilson has excelled at bringing together top-notch events from conception to completion.

"Her dedication to detail and strong meeting planning skills are a tremendous addition to any conference or event," says Jim Etkin, president of ME Productions.

Her upbeat personality and commitment to the success of each event she plans has allowed her to accrue a lengthy list of satisfied clients, including many Fortune 500 companies. In the past year alone, Wilson has coordinated more than 55 events, exceeding her internal goals, and still has more events scheduled before year's end. With a specialty in themed events, Wilson's imagination gets quite a workout recreating the Moulin Rouge, an Old West town, and more to match her clients' ideas for their events.

In addition to her work with ME, she is also an active member of Orlando's ISES chapter and currently serves as vice president of communication. In this post, she works with her committee in handling all correspondence with ISES event sponsors, writes and edits press releases, and compiles the weekly *ISES Monday Morning News* email sent to chapter members.

"It's fun to be involved in ISES," says Wilson. "It's a great way to stay involved in the industry and know what's going on."



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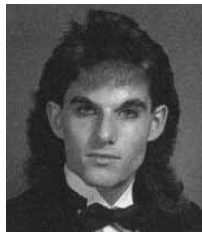
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## MEET THE CLASS OF 2007

With an industry that is constantly growing and an event calendar that is second to none, Florida is home to the best of the best in the event industry. The following innovators, though all under the age of 40, have already caught the industry's attention, and aren't slowing down. Here *BizBash Florida* sheds light on who they are, how they got where they are, and what to expect from them next. *By Brittany Peitsmeyer*

### SELLING A LIFESTYLE

**GISELLE DOVE, Gisnesia Design**

**BASIC STATS:** Giselle Dove, 39, is co-owner of Gisnesia Design, a Miami-based boutique production company catering to the corporate arena.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Dove moved to Miami from her homeland of Trinidad and Tobago at age 20. Graduating from the University of Miami with a bachelor's degree in education, she taught in the Miami-Dade County school system until 2006, when her flair for entertaining drove her and a business partner to turn their passion into a profession. Officially licensed since last year, Gisnesia Design executes as many as six events a month.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Dove custom-designs each event concept and pledges to never use the same item twice in the same way. "I love to use ordinary items in a novelty way," she says. "A client can walk into a venue and see that we used their scarves as tablecloths or vases as decanters." Gisnesia Design also created a line of unique gifts that are functional and can be branded to suit the occasion.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Dove plans to expand her business by publishing an electronic newsletter to share her design ideas, tips, and secrets.



### PRESIDENTIAL PRIVILEGES

**TARA LIASCENKO, The Link Event Professionals**

**BASIC STATS:** Tara Liaschenko, 34, is the owner of four-year-old Tampa-based meeting and special event firm the Link Event Professionals, which plans around 50 corporate, non-profit, real estate, and social events a year.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** When Liaschenko isn't busy heading up her firm, she is fulfilling her duties as leader of MPI's Tampa Bay chapter. "Volunteerism and professional development are very important to me, and I take them very seriously," says the MPI president of four years. Liaschenko was just awarded the elite CMM certification (global certification in meeting management), an honor only 488 people in the world share.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** In the upcoming year, Liaschenko plans to introduce more creative elements into the meeting market, as well as possibly expand her MPI involvement to an international level.



### CATERING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

**WARREN DIETEL, Puff 'n Stuff Catering**

**BASIC STATS:** Warren Dietel, 39, has been president and owner of Orlando's Puff 'n Stuff Catering since 2003, when he purchased the 27-year-old company from his parents.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** From washing dishes to loading trucks, Dietel spent most of his adolescence helping with the family business. Upon graduation from college, he joined the Disney International sales team and began traveling throughout Asia and Europe. While doing so, he discovered his strength: selling an experience. In 2001, after gaining corporate experience, he returned home to the family business and two years later, purchased the company.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Puff 'n Stuff's state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly facility in Orlando is designed to withstand hurricane force winds and with a generator on-site, the facility can run uninterrupted, regardless of what Mother Nature tosses its way. In 2004, Dietel and his team served in excess of 10,000 meals to hurricane relief workers over a two-week period.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "The customer is becoming increasingly more educated about food. Craving an experience and not just a satisfying meal, guests are always looking for something different," says Dietel. "In the upcoming year, Puff 'n Stuff will feature more interactive menus to encourage guest participation."



### BRINGING THE INDUSTRY TOGETHER

**JAMIE J. ORISTANO, Quest Drape**

**BASIC STATS:** At 38, he is the national sales manager of premium drape provider Quest Drape. Jamie Oristano is responsible for the company's six regional offices, located in Dallas, Miami, Orlando, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and most recently Las Vegas.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Oristano began moonlighting at his brother's Florida-based company, Galaxy Productions, in 2001, after having worked in hospitality-industry technology, installing computer systems in restaurants, bars, and hotels.



Working with his brother, Oristano knew he had found his niche. Four years later, he took a sales position with Quest Drape in Miami, where he quickly climbed the ladder to his current position at the top of the division.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** "I believe in building relationships first, then going after the business," says Oristano. "The more relationships you have in the industry, the greater the likelihood of growing your business and yourself, professionally."

Constantly submerging himself into the industry, he not only serves on the ISES International Education Board and is a member of MPI, but is also responsible for one of the industry's biggest networking events of the year. Chairman of the South Florida Holiday Industry Party, Oristano (with the aid of an appointed committee) has managed to bring together more than nine associations, 30 sponsors, and 600 industry professionals to raise money for area charities. Last year's event raised more than \$15,000, and Oristano forecasts that this year's denim-and-diamonds-themed fund-raiser will gross well over \$20,000.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** In the upcoming year, Oristano plans to expand the four-year-old industry party to major cities throughout the United States and Florida, as well as introducing Quest Drape to new markets such as D.C. and Chicago. He also plans to increase his ISES responsibilities on an international level.

## DESTINATION SUCCESS

### NICOLE HERNANDEZ, Destination Planning Corporation

**BASIC STATS:** Nicole Hernandez, 27, is the senior event design manager of Destination Planning Corporation in Orlando, which tackles more than 200 events per year.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** As a marketing major in college, Hernandez took on an internship with the event department of Orlando's Economic Development Commission, where she discovered her talent for event design and fell in love with the industry. From there she joined Orlando's Art of the Party as their senior event designer. After three years there, Hernandez left to join the Jacksonville-based Destination Planning Corporation and introduce them to the Orlando market.



**BREAKING THE MOLD:** This past February, Hernandez introduced a new entity to the company—Event Design Studio. This division of the DMC creates custom design concepts under Hernandez's direction. With this program, she works noncompetitively with other DMCs in the area that don't have a strong creative department. "I have built relationships with vendors nationwide, and I am always gathering them from all over to bring something new to the table that the client has never seen," Hernandez says.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** With exclusive contracts with six hotels in Jacksonville and Orlando for 2008, Hernandez plans to grow that number, as well as expand her creative division to both of Florida's coasts.

## PHILANTHROPY FUNCTIONS

### KELLY ROWELL, Martin Memorial Foundation

**BASIC STATS:** Industry newcomer Kelly Rowell, 26, is the event coordinator for Martin Memorial Foundation in Stuart. A large nonprofit foundation specializing in health care through philanthropy, Kelly and her team plan 35 events a year, ranging from golf tournaments to galas.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Rowell has always been an avid volunteer for the foundation. When a position opened in 2005, her tradeshow background and creative instincts made her the perfect candidate.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Among the youngest in the industry, Rowell is an amazingly fast learner. After only a little more than a year in the industry, she took home an award for organizational planner of the year at this year's *Event Solutions* Spotlight Awards. To kick off the Treasure Coast's event season, the foundation hosts its annual Chrysanthemum Ball, commonly referred to as the "Mum" Ball. For last year's event, Rowell transformed an airplane hangar into a Spanish oasis, complete with a to-scale street scene and wines and olive oils imported directly from Spain. "A Night In Spain" welcomed 600 guests and raised more than \$1.5 million dollars for the foundation.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Growth. Since her arrival, Rowell has increased attendance at Memorial Foundation events by 50 percent. "As competition grows, standing out among other nonprofits is our largest hurdle. We have been putting a big effort into marketing for the upcoming year," she says.



## GIVING BACK

### DANIELLE SEABERG, Grand Events of Florida

**BASIC STATS:** Danielle Seaberg, 39, is president of family-owned Grand Events of Florida. This full-service Tampa production company has been in business for more than 21 years, servicing all of the Southeast.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** A hospitality graduate of Florida State University, Seaberg worked with the Orange County Convention Center and the Orlando CVB for five years. In 2002, after a stint in the Chicago hospitality market, she joined the family business as president.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** While serving as Tampa MPI's vice president of membership, Seaberg is also constantly giving back to the community. All of Grand Event's employees donate discounted services and labor to charities of their choice on a regular basis. The American Cancer Society and Humane Society, for example, have hosted several successful events with contributions from Seaberg's company, something they hadn't done prior to her arrival.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Seaberg plans to expand her furniture line, as well as join forces with advertising and public relation firms to create custom-branded decor elements for their corporate clients, creating a one-stop shop.



## BALANCING ACT

### MONICA GLASS, Gen Art

**BASIC STATS:** Monica Glass, 30, is the director of events for Gen Art, a non-profit entertainment organization dedicated to showcasing emerging fashion designers, filmmakers, musicians, and visual artists. With offices in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Miami, Gen Art produces more than 30 showcases a year in Miami and more than 100 nationwide.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Raised in Fort Lauderdale, Glass graduated from Florida International University with a degree in English literature. Though teaching seemed like the best fit for her degree, she knew the arts were her passion, so she joined the Clear Channel Communications team; two positions later, she was promoting concerts for their theatrical department. Already a Gen Art member, in 2003 Glass took over the position of Southeast regional director. Now director of events, she is responsible for some of Miami's most anticipated events of the year.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** A true multitasker, Glass not only executes \$100,000 events on a regular basis, but also signs sponsors to back many of them. "It's easy to think of elaborate ideas and plan a multi-thousand dollar event, but getting the money—that's a different story," she says. Her ability to balance creativity with a sense of reality, paired with her meticulous attention to detail, is what makes her such a great planner. "From the invitations and guest list to the food, beverage, and overall flow, nothing outweighs anything else in importance," she says. "I hold all aspects of an event equally."

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Staying a step ahead, Glass is the most excited she has ever been about the birth of new venues around the city, especially unconventional spaces that will debut at Gen Art events.



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## THE BUSINESS MAN

**EDDIE DIAZ, Encore Creations**

**BASIC STATS:** At 33, Eddie Diaz is the C.E.O. and founder of Orlando's full-service production company Encore Creations. A set designer by trade, this year Diaz was recognized with both an *Event Solutions* Spotlight Award and was named by both *Orlando Style* magazine and RedCarpetMonday, an online business networking site, as one of Orlando's top 10 young and powerful.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** In 1991 Diaz came to the United States from Puerto Rico and pursued a degree in theme management at the University of Central Florida. Upon graduation he worked with Disney Entertainment both on the creative and performing sides, before starting Encore in 2003. The young company handles more than 75 projects per year, ranging from special events, entertainment design and development, marketing, interior theme

design, costuming, and signature shows.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Diaz, who still draws all design concepts by hand, understands the importance of having a good balance between creativity and business relations. "You can always give a client fluff and even deliver that wow factor, but without a strategic business platform, you will never make any profit," he says. "After all, that's why we're all here, right?" With a love for the performing arts, Diaz is launching his European-style variety show, Teatro Storvandre. Meaning "long-distance travelers," the show incorporates cabaret, comedy, and aerial performances.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "I forecast history repeating itself and the rebirth of old traditions," he says. "There is an appeal for nostalgic events that bring guests back to their roots, while at the same time incorporating all of the industry's technological advances."



## THE YOUNG SCIENTIST

**BRIAN AARON, Aaron's Catering**

**BASIC STATS:** Brian Aaron, 26, is owner and executive chef of Aaron's Catering in Miami.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Aaron, a Le Cordon Bleu graduate, turned his hobby into a business by starting his own catering company from scratch. Aaron not only heads his Miami-based company, he spends his spare time teaching aspiring chefs at Miami-Dade Community College.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Aaron brings an element of science to the table with his business. His kitchen—or more appropriately, his lab—

isn't complete without helium, liquid nitrogen, and carbon dioxide. "I like to experiment with food in a way that the presentation and or composition of the dish gives guests an opportunity to be interactive," says Aaron. Some of his signature scientific creations include smoking cocktails, cotton candy hors d'oeuvres, and jumbo shrimp paired with a cocktail sauce sorbet.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "This is just the beginning; I want to travel and learn from different chefs across the country," says Aaron. "I am also experimenting with helium and creating unique ways to pair sauces with hors d'oeuvres, like using pipettes and gel caps."

## MAKING WAVES

**CLAY CONLEY, Azul**

**BASIC STATS:** Clay Conley, 33, is executive chef of Miami's Azul, a top-rated restaurant at the Mandarin Oriental hotel.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Originally from a small town in Maine, Conley fell in love with the restaurant environment at age 13 when he worked as a volunteer dishwasher. Several years later, the young chef found himself in Boston and working at Todd English, the restaurant that would soon offer him his first executive chef title. Then, at 26, he moved to Las Vegas, accepting the executive chef position at Todd English's Olives restaurant at the Bellagio Hotel.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** When Conley isn't in his kitchen at Azul, he can be found alongside his fellow chefs at charitable events like Taste of America around South Florida. "I'm very laid-back for a chef, and I think my kitchen and my approach to food reflects that. I take the best possible ingredi-

ents and combine them in a natural way with ingredients that bring out the flavors," says Conley.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "Eventually I want to open a casual restaurant with a wide-open kitchen, wood-fired grills, and rotisseries. Something warm and inviting and a little bit on the rustic side, but refined, like my kind of food," says Conley.



## JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES

**JENNIFER WERTLY, Sight and Sound Productions**

**BASIC STATS:** At 24, Jennifer Wertly is the senior project manager of Jacksonville-based Sight and Sound Productions, a nationwide meeting planning firm specializing in audiovisual, that just celebrated its 20th anniversary.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** "To be honest, I came on board part-time because I knew someone here and needed a job. I knew that I wanted to plan events, and Sight and Sound was the right place for me," says Wertly. "It has almost been three years and I can only see myself growing from here."

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Wertly not only oversees audiovisual projects, but is also involved with helping her clients coordinate all aspects of their events. From accompanying them on site inspections, helping decide on the food and beverages to be served, and working directly with other vendors, Wertly holds client relations in high regard. In addition to her duties at Sight and Sound, she is also vice president of administration for the North Florida's MPI chapter.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "I am looking forward to celebrating Sight and Sound's 21st anniversary next year, and hope to soon become the director of the project management department so I can increase the company's planning capabilities."



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## INTERN TURNED INNOVATOR

**ERIN SKAFF, BAE Systems Product Group**

**BASIC STATS:** Erin Skaff, 24, is the event manager for BAE Systems Product Group, the third-largest manufacturer of law enforcement and military security products worldwide.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Skaff graduated from the University of Florida with a degree in Recreation and Tourism. From there, she completed a yearlong internship with Jacksonville's PRI Productions. With a knack for organization and a flair for creative design, she joined BAE Systems as trade show coordinator and quickly advanced to her current position as event manager.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Since her company exhibits at more than 250 trade shows a year, Skaff is constantly creating ways to stand out among other exhibitors. Instead of purchasing two booths adjacent to each other, she will purchase them parallel from one another and use overhead fabric arches or banners to create the illusion of a bigger booth.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "Right now I am trying to learn as much as I can from the corporate environment," says Skaff. "My long-term goal is to open a multi-purpose venue for social functions."



## THE RIGHT HAND MAN

**BECO BYERS, Room Service Furniture and Event Rentals**

**BASIC STATS:** Beco Byers, 33, is the Miami account manager for Room Service Furniture and Event Rentals, supplying rentals for more than 20 events a week.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Byers got into the industry in 1998 when he helped plan an event for Richard Branson while working at London's ultra-exclusive China White. Six years later, Byers returned to the U.S. and began working for the Opus Group, a travel incentive company, where his expertise in both planning and travel led him to excel. Eager to be more involved in the event industry, he joined the Room Service team last year and hasn't looked back since.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** "After planning events and working with suppliers and DMCs over the years, I can relate to the planner more efficiently and bring a different level of professionalism to the equation," says Byers of his business relationships. "I understand what they go through, and every step I take as a supplier is to help make their job easier." He is also on the special events committee of both ISES and MPI and a member of the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce Green Initiative.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Instead of sending appreciation baskets to their clients, Byers and his team at Room Service donate sums of money to a local environmental charity in the clients' names and then present them with the certificate. "In the upcoming year, I would like to see the industry as a whole become more environmentally conscious," states Byers.



## GREEN IS THE WORD

**KAREN MOORE, Florida Department of Environmental Protection**

**BASIC STATS:** Karen Moore, 34, is the program coordinator for the Green Lodging Program, an organization that not only recognizes and rewards environmentally conscious lodging facilities in the state, but also helps properties devise a plan and step-by-step agenda to going green.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** A stint as the environmental coordinator for Gaston County in North Carolina gave Moore the opportunity to help people. "It was then that I realized I didn't like the engineering part so much, but really enjoyed making strides for the environment," says Moore. Moore began building the Green Lodging Program in 2002 and has since awarded 52 properties with the Green Lodging Designation and has another 185 currently working towards certification.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** As program coordinator, she provides a unique support system and one-on-one assistance to all properties on a weekly basis. "I understand how much of a big change this is for most properties, so I want to assure them that I am available to them 100%," says Moore.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Moore hopes more companies will get on board with the program as a result of Gov. Charlie Crist's executive order requiring government agencies to use designated green properties for their events. She also hopes to expand the program to include convention centers, restaurants, off-site spaces, and other like venues.



## VARSITY DETAILER

**DEREK EATON, PRI Productions**

**BASIC STATS:** Derek Eaton, 37, is vice president of special events at Jacksonville's PRI Productions.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Eaton joined PRI when the company first entered the industry in 1994. After being in business for four years, PRI added a special event company to its masthead and Eaton stepped in to develop the entity's policies and procedures, which are still in use today.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Eaton's attention to detail and innovative layered design concepts have been recognized by both *Event Solutions* and *Special Events* magazines. "Details contribute to our success," says Eaton, who sees every project through from the initial brainstorming session to the client's feedback. Outside of PRI, he is an active member of ISES Orlando, serving as vice president of membership.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Because of Eaton's biology degree, he has a conscious understanding of the environmental issues surrounding the industry. Already taking strides to conserve energy in ways such as using LED lighting, he hopes to employ greener practices in the upcoming year.



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## SOIREES WITH SINCERITY

**FÉ DOMENICH, The Event Firm**

**BASIC STATS:** Fé Domenich, 38, is president and owner of The Event Firm in Miami. A full-service boutique production company, her two-and-a-half-year-old business plans 20-24 events each month.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Domenich's first entrepreneur endeavor was All Events, a ticket broker service, where she not only found premium tickets for sporting events, concerts, and the like for her clients, but also planned pre- and post-events for them. "All Events gave me the opportunity to explore event design rather than just logistics," says Domenich.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Despite her rave reviews from clients, Domenich remains humble. "To me, it's not about the dollar. I am very thankful for my clients and I believe in servicing them before assessing the profit," says Domenich. Though she downplays her work, Domenich's events are anything but ordinary. Her portfolio includes the MTV Video Music Awards, Latin Billboard Awards, and functions for John Travolta.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** "In 2008 I hope to see more camaraderie amongst industry competitors," says Domenich. "If we open the lines of collaboration, we can better service our clients."



## THE ENTERTAINER

**CHRISTINE IVANOV LOGAN, T. Skorman Productions**

**BASIC STATS:** Christine Ivanov Logan, 37, is an entertainment specialist for T. Skorman Productions, an entertainment company with 25+ years in the industry based in Orlando.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** While a broadcasting student at the University of Central Florida, Logan worked as an entertainment planner who scouted and booked talent for her campus. Early on, she was recognized for her diligent work and was twice voted "Campus Activities Board Director of the

Year." After graduating, Logan spent six years honing her sales skills at DeLuca Enterprises, Inc., before moving to T. Skorman in 1999.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** Logan is the Central Florida representative for the internationally renowned show, The Three Waiters. She is also the president-elect for Orlando's ISES chapter. Prior to that she served the chapter for two years as the VP of communications. During that time, she was in charge of the ISES Monday Morning News, a weekly information update for chapter members and other industry professionals.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** Looking forward to next year's ISES EventWorld conference, Logan, who will serve as president of the ISES Orlando Chapter, also hopes to expand the cast of The Three Waiters locally.

## ROUND-THE-CLOCK PERFECTION

**JANICE PETRELLI, Perfect Planning, LLC**

**BASIC STATS:** At 31, Janice Petrelli is president of full-service event planning firm Perfect Planning LLC. In business for more than two years, the Jacksonville-based company plans 15 to 20 multi-day events annually.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** Petrelli broke into the industry eight years ago working as a marketing assistant for Automatic Data Processing in New York. There she aided in planning trade shows, dinner galas, and more. "I knew right then that I had found my niche," says Petrelli.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** With her office set up in her home, Petrelli is accessible to her clients 24/7. She prides herself in never being out of reach. When she's not planning events for her corporate and social clients, she is making strides in developing Jacksonville's event industry. In addition to her business, Petrelli is a member of the Business Networking International, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, Women's Professional Council, and IMPACT Jax organizations.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** In the upcoming year she plans to expand her business by adding more employees, moving into a larger facility, and tackling more events across the country. "If there's something I haven't done—I want to try it," says Petrelli. "I am always looking for new adventures."



## THE UNDERCLASSMAN

**JOANNA BARRETT, SLK Creative**

**BASIC STATS:** Currently finishing her bachelor's degree in sports, events, and entertainment management at Johnson and Wales University in Miami, Joanna Barrett, 21, works at SLK Creative, a marketing and public relations firm for the event industry, and is constantly finding new ways to immerse herself in the field.

**BREAKING THE ICE:** In 2006 she completed an internship with the Country Music Association in Nashville, helping with the production of the highly televised Country Music Awards.

**BREAKING THE MOLD:** When Barrett is not juggling classes, working as editor in chief for the university newspaper, or fund-raising for her sorority, she is volunteering at various events nationwide. Her portfolio includes Super Bowl XLI, NBA All-Star games in Las Vegas and Houston, and the 2005 MTV VMAs.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN '08:** After graduation in February, the possibilities are endless. "Right now I am open to a lot of different niches, from planning and PR to production. I am really just trying to survey my opportunities and grow my contacts in the industry," says Barrett.



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