

MARCH | 08

Mann About Town

| LIVING WELL IN NEW YORK |

SUSAN KIND
WANTS THE
GOOD LIFE

TOVAH FELD SHUH
PLAYS WITH
ROLES

STEVE COHEN
WORKS
HIS MAGIC

A photograph of Patti Stanger, a woman with long dark hair and bangs, wearing a black sleeveless dress. She is smiling and holding a large, ornate golden bow with a red and white dotted pattern. The bow is curved and has a decorative arrowhead. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

PATTI STANGER
PLAYS CUPID

Bonnie Walker Answers:



Questions That Get To The Heart Of The Matter

How do you stay focused on the things that matter most?

My profession requires extraordinary attention to every detail. In addition to design details and vendor and event schedules, I stay focused on things that matter most by being energized and challenged to create an event that reflects the style, attitude and tastes of my clients.

What's the best advice you've ever gotten?

The best advice I have ever gotten was from each of my parents. My father's advice was very simple—Listen carefully to what people say. No matter how much you think you know about a subject there is always more to learn from someone everyday. My mother always told me to respect everyone and value a friend's loyalty and honesty. "Respect, respect, respect," she would tell me.

Who inspires you?

Inspiration comes from many places. Every day I am inspired by the men and women who boldly volunteer to protect our country, by my son Kevin for his quiet confidence and by my son Brian for his strength of character. A few years ago I planned a Bar Mitzvah for an autistic child who also suffered from a rare form of cancer. I will always remember Benjamin. Despite the fact that he had over 100 surgeries during the first 13 years of his life, he still had the wishful heart of a child who believed anything was possible. Benjamin's Bar Mitzvah was the most memorable and inspirational event that I have ever planned.

How do you "give back"?

Since they were young, I have told my children that they should try and do one good thing for another person everyday. I try to live by the same mantra by donating my time and professional skills for the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation Charity Event every year in Pittsburgh. The committee for the event works year-round to raise millions of dollars for diabetes research. For the last 15 years, we have created some of the most memorable galas.

Share a moment when your faith changed your life.

I believe that through faith, we acquire an important personal empowerment that can inspire us to move mountains. Years ago my life was changed when we discovered our son had juvenile diabetes. I worried about how his life would be different from his friends, about a lifetime of self-administered insulin treatments and about constant blood sugar monitoring. My faith was strengthened over the years as I watched my son overcome challenge after challenge while attempting to control his disease and all the while continuing to excel as a student athlete and a model child.

As one of the region's top party planners, Bonnie Walker, owner of Bonnie Walker Events, has mastered the art of a picture-perfect event. After 25 years, this pioneer in the field of event planning has raised her profession to an exquisite art. In her hands, Bar Mitzvahs become fundraisers for charitable causes and first-class dinner parties go from cliché to classy. The time spent getting to know her clients can result in simple themes built around a pattern or color—like the Burberry theme that subtly tracked from the invitations to the napkins to the ties the waiters wore. They could be as grand as her 1998 Titanic-themed bash that made headlines around the world—making a client's favorite movie come to life with blue lighting and make-believe icebergs. And when the dream calls for a stand-up show by Whoopi Goldberg, a personal serenade from Michael Bolton, or a performance by hip-hop star Missy Elliot? Bonnie's the go-to gal.