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Impeccable customer service is goal of caterer Wade Hartsfield

By Mark Sullivan

Posted March 2, 2010 at midnight

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Wade Hartsfield (center) presents a tasting for (from left) Sheri Gardner, Paul Arbogast, and Alayne Gardner at the Lodge at Teton Trek, where Paul and Alayne will have their wedding reception.

In a tough economy, it's essential that businesses emphasize quality service to stand out, and that's Wade Hartsfield's key to keeping his catering business competitive.

The owner of Wade & Company Boutique Catering and Event Design said he's focused on providing what he calls a "boutique experience" for his more than 100 local clients.

"We have done corporate events with Fortune 500 companies, big-budget weddings, and large picnics in the middle of a cotton field," Hartsfield said. "Every dollar is precious to companies, businesses and couples in this challenging economy. Going above and beyond is our trademark."

"When a client chooses us, they not only get expert advice on choosing the right custom menu, but our goal is to make everything perfect -- whether it is for three to 3,000 people," said Hartsfield, who earned a business degree from Belhaven College and has

experience in city government with special-event production and food and event design.

Despite the economy's impact on food and beverage industries, catering is holding its own, says Carl Sacks, director of consulting for Catersource.

Whereas the National Restaurant Association predicted the industry would be down about 5 percent at the end of 2009, the catering industry only experienced a 2 percent drop, with many companies seeing substantial increases in business.

"Although corporate meeting business declined, companies that historically have gone to hotels for regional or national conferences instead are staying in their local markets, and that kind of business typically is handled by caterers," Sacks said in a release. "Groups want to save on travel costs, but they still need to have meetings. Whenever you have meetings, you have to have food and beverage "

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they still need to have meetings. Whenever you have meetings, you have to have food and beverage.

Terry Reeves, past president of the Memphis chapter of the National Association of Catering Executives, said although the economy has affected the catering business, "it is coming back strong."

"One difference is that individuals, businesses and corporations are watching every dollar spent," said Reeves, who is special-events coordinator for Hicks Convention Services and Special Events. "Most people come into the event knowing what they want and how much money they want to spend."

Judy Jenkins' only daughter, Anne, was married in January and the family partnered with the Hartsfield team to handle the catering and other key details.

"Having someone to help you during such a challenging but happy time is very important," she said. "Wade and his team were simply outstanding. He was focused on my needs and made creative suggestions that made the day even more special. On the same day of my daughter's wedding, Wade was responsible for catering the opening of the Memphis Law School. He made us feel like our event was the most important."

Growing up in Covington, Tenn., Hartsfield dreamed of taking the traits of impeccable customer service and small-town values into the business world.

"My interests, hobbies and likes have always revolved around cooking, hosting parties, planning events, and taking care of people," said Hartsfield, who began his business in 2006. "I am now getting paid for my passion in life."

WADE & COMPANY BOUTIQUE CATERING AND EVENT DESIGN

Owner: Wade Hartsfield

Address: 477 N. Fifth

Phone: 260-3766

On the Web: wadeandcompanycatering.com

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16	17	18	
FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MORE

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Strawberry Plains Audubon Center

Holly Springs (Miss.) Kudzu Festival

Marshall County Fairgrounds

Boating Education; Student Course

9 a.m.

Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center

Portrait Painting Workshop with Sue Foell

9:30 a.m.

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10 a.m.

The Children's Museum of Memphis

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