

TAG TEAM

With their new production firm, Denise McGowan and Michelle Durpetti share experience in entertainment, PR, marketing, and events.

One summer night in 2007, a fortuitous thing happened while **Michelle Durpetti**—then an independent event planner—was on a riverboat cruise of Chicago. After years as a publicist at event planning and public affairs firm Jasculca/Terman and Associates, Durpetti had one thing left on her dream-job list: She wanted to work on the Green Tie Ball. "I would have swept out bathrooms to work on that event," she says of the Gateway Green's annual fund-raiser. "It just seemed like the biggest and brightest and best of the social galas—I really wanted to be a part of it."

Then, on that summertime cruise, Durpetti met **Denise McGowan**, another independent planner with 30 years of experience—including a nine-year stint as Navy Pier's entertainment director—who was then overseeing logistics for that summer's Green Tie Ball.

A few days later, the two were working side by side as associate producers of the 3,000-guest event.

When their collaboration went off without a hitch, they felt they had the makings of a strong team in the long-term, too. In March of 2008, McGowan Durpetti and Associates (312.994.2620, mcgowandurpetti.com) opened in River North. Handling everything from vendor contract negotiations to invitation design, the firm produces events for corporate and nonprofit organizations. "I come with years of experience in producing entertainment; Michelle has been on the PR and marketing side. Our blended viewpoints and opinions make us unique. We can give clients so many different points of view," says McGowan.

The partners are currently working on events associated with September's Congressional Medal of Honor Society



Denise McGowan and Michelle Durpetti

Convention and producing a temporary marketplace for the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans. They also continue to produce the fund-raiser that initially brought them together.

According to Vince Pagone, managing director of the Gateway Green, "McGowan and Durpetti have a willingness to do whatever it takes to produce a successful event. They never lose sight of the mission of the event—they really focus on its purpose. And as a nonprofit, that's very important to us." —Jenny Berg



Last year's Carnivale-themed Green Tie Ball



At Bottles and Brushes events, local artists lead guests through painting exercises.

ART MEETS WINE

Stephanie King's **Bottles and Brushes** (773.750.0491, bottles-brushes.com) creates customized drinking and painting events for groups of 15 to 150. During two- or three-hour sessions, participants learn to re-create a work by a local artist. King brings the original work for

ACTIVITY guests to replicate—along with necessary supplies—to locations throughout the city and suburbs, and classes are led by professional artists. Each event costs \$35 to \$45 per person, and guests get to take their work home. For an extra charge, King can arrange for a sommelier to conduct a wine tasting, or arrange for catering and takeaway gifts such as keepsake paintbrushes. —J.B.

Interactive Happy Hours

Mixologist Adam Seger—who oversees the drinks menu at **Nacional 27**—now offers private cocktail-making classes.

ACTIVITY Each 90-minute session starts with a welcome drink, and then groups of 15 to 60 learn how to concoct two to three cocktails. Drinks incorporate ingredients such as fresh passion fruit or seasonal spices, and the menu can be customized to reflect a theme. Products and equipment can be brought to offices and event spaces, and guests receive take-home recipe cards. Classes range from \$275 to \$550 each, with additional fees for travel and product costs, and can be arranged through **Edible Ink PR and Marketing** (847.462.8489). —J.B.



Seger's Cuatro Citrus Cazuela cocktail

PHOTOS: NICOLE RADIA FOR BIZBASH (PORTRAIT), ERIC CRAIG FOR BIZBASH, VRAI PHOTOS (BOTTLES & BRUSHES), LAURIE PROFITT (COCKTAIL).