

Every culture, every religion, everyone has one reason or another to celebrate. Here at *The Island Voice* we have plenty of reason to be celebrating—our second anniversary edition! Thanks to everyone who has played a role in making the past two years a rip-



roaring success—our loyal advertisers, our readers and, of course, our talented staff. We've grown from a small 28-page magazine with 18 paying advertisers, to more than 80 pages and 100-plus advertisers. I can't say thank you to everyone enough.

To help us commemorate this fabulous occasion, we've decided to feature celebrations from all over this county. We have Ann Conner's 80th birthday party on board the *Rivership Romance*; Huit the dog's birthday party with all his doggy buddies; the grand opening of *Wings*; Ava Bryan's formal tea party for her fourth birthday; Inez's beautiful granddaughter's dance recital; a beautiful sunrise wedding on New Smyrna Beach; St. Paul's Episcopal Church's celebration of 100 years of faith fellowship and service; Jake, one of my favorite little guys, graduating from preschool; and last but not least, bunches of family reunion pictures. Every year these families come to NSB from all over the country—to embrace their long-distance family members and party on the

most beautiful beach in Florida.

Planning a party or a celebration is sometimes overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. There are local, professional party planners who can take the guesswork out of any occasion. I was fortunate enough this summer to meet a woman in New Smyrna Beach who is Volusia County's only accredited Celebrant. Before I met Dr. Cheri Erdman I didn't even know that there was such a thing as a Celebrant. After meeting with her, I find myself somewhat envious of her profession.

Apparently the concept of Celebrancy began in Australia in 1973 by former Attorney General Lionel Murphy. At that time, Australian law authorized only Lutheran and Catholic clergy to perform weddings. For couples who didn't belong to either church, the law provided only for a marriage at the Registry, a civil office where couples lined up in the hallway to await their minute-long ceremony, over which they had no input or control. Murphy's vision was to bring dignity and personal choice to wedding ceremonies for couples who didn't wish to be married in Lutheran, Catholic or civil ceremonies. He changed Australian law and authorized the appointment of civil Celebrants, who would perform individualized ceremonies approved by the couples, incorporating their wishes and focusing on the arts.

What a great job Cheri has! She creates personalized ceremonies for couples and families. Her expertise includes retirements, vow renewals, baby welcomings, house blessings and end-of-life of a loved one, human or animal. She explained that celebrating a life transition helps us to accept change and reconnects us to family and friends.

Here are a few general suggestions from Dr. Cheri for planning your next occasion:

Create a ceremonial time and place to set the celebration apart from "ordinary" times and places. This may seem obvious, yet we don't always choose a significant setting. A milestone birthday might be held in a favorite restaurant, but what will set it apart as a different occasion from any other time you've eaten there? Is there another place that represents the interest of the person being honored? A nature lover's celebration held outdoors in a park or garden would be a meaningful out-of-the-ordinary venue. A person who loves the ocean might like to celebrate there; an avid reader might enjoy being honored in a local bookstore or library after hours; a quilter in her favorite fabric shop; a boater on a cruise, and so on. Remember that choosing a ceremonial place for your celebration creates a tone and atmosphere for what is to come—formal or informal, intimate or raucous.

Wherever you decide to gather, create a ceremonial table at the entrance that holds special photographs and keepsakes important to the honoree and the occasion, brought in by family and friends. These signify that something special is being celebrated—beyond the usual visiting and eating. It's a ceremony within the celebration! For ideas, read on.

Personalize!

Make this event stand out from a "cookie-cutter" party by making it unique to the person you're honoring. Use the honoree's own words to tell his or her story.

