

"More Than A Bridesmaid" – Appeared in the Oregonian (Oregon's largest newspaper) on March 15th 2005.

By MICHELLE MANDEL
THE OREGONIAN

Washington County's first-ever bridal show unfolds this weekend with all the hopeful expectations of a debutante's coming-out ball.

Organizers of the vendor-packed Washington County Bridal Showcase and community leaders see the event at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Tigard as a possible barometer of big things to come. Portland has long overshadowed

IF YOU GO

What: The Washington County Bridal Showcase, the county's first ever, featuring more than 70 vendors

When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Where: Embassy Suites Hotel, 9000 S.W. Washington Square Road, Tigard.

Tickets: \$6 at the door; \$3 off coupon available online.

On the Web:
www.washingtoncountybridalshowcase.com

once-rural Washington County, drawing most conventions, concerts and events.

This show, coupled with a planned exhibition center at the Washington County Fair Complex, brings oomph to the idea that Beaverton, Tigard and Hillsboro have populations and

buying power deserving of front-door service.

"I'd like to see more of our dollars not be exported to downtown Portland," says Penny Bakefelt, executive director of the Convention & Visitors Bureau of Washington County.

"Having our own events center makes it more convenient for us who live and work here."

Lora Heil-Frone wishes the exposition center, slated for completion in late 2006, were up and

Please see **SHOWS**, Page 10

MORE THAN A bridesmaid

A successful turnout fuels hopes of keeping dollars closer to home



Inside: It takes patience for Liz Weiler of Aloha to create the little couples that adorn wedding cakes. She calls each one a piece of art that newlyweds can keep forever. Weiler is one of 71 vendors who will be displaying their wares at the Washington County Bridal Showcase. Story on **Page 10**.

Whether with clay, chocolate or flowers, entrepreneurs are eager to cater to bridal parties

By MICHELLE MANDEL
THE OREGONIAN

Those in-the-know in Washington County's wedding world will be at the county's first Bridal Showcase this weekend.

The 71 vendors who have signed up run the gamut from caterers to a cosmetic dentist.

Here's a peek at three local businesses and the matrimonial fare they hope to share.

Couples in clay

The plastic brides and grooms that adorn wedding cakes rarely resemble the couple smooching at the altar.

That's why Liz Weiler started her business, Captured in Clay. The 25-year-old Aloha woman thinks cake toppers should reflect reality, as well as survive far beyond the special day.

So she sculpts small brides and grooms that look like their full-size counterparts.

"They're quite different," says Weiler, who dreamed up the idea five years ago and last year made it her full-time job. "It's a piece of art that reflects them."

Weiler works at home, listening to Christian CDs, her Yorkshire terrier at her feet. Using a photograph provided by the customer as her guide, she shapes a wire frame, then molds colored polymer clay over it. Next she attaches clay appendages and clothing, such as the gown and tux, cooks the figures, adds more features, cooks everything again, and so on, until she paints on the finishing details.

The price tag for all this pampering: \$350.

"I know that sounds expensive," Weiler says. "But each couple takes me a full week to complete."

Weiler says she's proud of the 25 or so wedding couples she's made to date. One stands out in particular.

Three years ago, Weiler wed her husband, Andrew.

"I was so busy planning my wedding, it was really hard to do a self-portrait," she says. "I took one liberty with us. We were going to Hawaii on our honeymoon.

"So I made us tan."