

Ann Marie Arzt '85

HOSTING GALA EVENTS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Chicagoland public relations entrepreneur Ann Marie Arzt says starting a business is “all about who you know,” a concept she used to get her own company going in 1997.

Arzt leveraged the business contacts she'd made the previous two years as marketing director for a Bloomingdale's store she helped open in Skokie, Ill.

“People knew who I was,” she said. “I was able to quickly acquire some large special events accounts that have stayed with me for many years.”



Ann Marie Arzi

But Arzt, 45, learned the value of being known long before she started her public relations and special events company, EventScape Inc., out of her home in Barrington, Ill.

Two years after high school, she said, she chose UW-Whitewater for her undergraduate studies because it offered the best combination of solid academics with small class sizes.

“It was very one-on-one, with great teachers who really took an interest in their students and knew who the students were in the class,” Arzt said. “It was probably the best decision I've ever made.”

Arzt graduated in 1985 with a journalism degree.

Some of her clients include the American Lung Association, The Cheesecake Factory, the Cancer Wellness Center, Saab and Rush North Shore Medical Center. Her business focus, she said, has been on non-profit social service organizations serving people with disabilities.

In 2003, she won a national award from Special Events magazine for planning the Chicago Rita Hayworth Gala, which raised more than \$1 million for Alzheimer's research. Held at Chicago's Civic Opera House, the 800-guest event featured a flamenco performance and a four-course menu by celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck.

But lately, both corporate and non-profit organizations are cutting back on lavish parties.

“My entire industry is feeling the recession in a very hard way,” she said. “Whenever there's an economic downturn, non-necessity spending is the first thing affected.”

Downsizing an event might mean hiring an 8-piece orchestra instead of a 14-piece one, she said, or spending only \$100 on floral centerpieces rather than \$250.

CLASS NOTES

2001

Donald Alan Neff of Fort Atkinson received his doctor of medicine degree from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

2002

Holli Schaible, a Wauwatosa native, is the athletic trainer for the University of Wisconsin-Madison women's basketball team.

2003

John Faust is the drama teacher at Reach for the Stars Studio in Sun Prairie, where he teaches elementary and high school students.

Zachary Luhman was appointed director of residence life at Hood College in Frederick, Md.

Tonia (Korth) Maly has been promoted to trust investment officer for First National Bank and Trust Co. in Clinton.

Sara Pellowski joined Milwaukee-based public relations firm Bader Rutter as an assistant account executive.

James Samz has been named band director at Estero High School in Estero, Fla.

Thomas Stefaniak has been hired as the first executive director of the Unclaimed Property Professionals Organization in New York City.

Joe and Wendy (Heth) Staller own and operate their own vineyard and harvested their first crop of grapes at the Staller Estate Vineyard Winery near Whitewater.

2004

Ryan Garcia has been hired as planning project manager at R.H. Batterman and Company, a Beloit company that provides civil engineering, land surveying and project planning services.

Matthew Miller received his master's degree in music performance from the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee.

2005

Jill Mishur has been named marketing director at RSV Engineering, a civil engineering, surveying and environmental consulting firm in Big Bend.

Spencer Styles has been named a senior accountant with SingerLewak in Los Angeles.