

ARA Event Pros

The newsletter for party and event professionals



PartyCAD gives form to event concept

No doubt you have had a bride come to you for assistance with her wedding reception that she wants to hold in her backyard. She knows she wants a tent large enough to cover a dance floor and DJ, plus tables and chairs. She's going to have the event catered, but she is not sure whether she wants a sit-down dinner or buffet line. It will depend on space and right now she can't visualize how all of this will come together. She's not sure whether her yard will be able to accommodate all that she wants.



The PartyCAD drawing created by Dan Skena, CERP, of PartySavvy in Monroeville, Pa., provided an excellent blueprint for the actual event.

She has presented her ideas to two vendors. She's heard you have a program that would allow her to see exactly how things would look.

You go to her home, measure and put all of the information into the PartyCAD software program, designed by Hufnagel Software in Clarion, Pa., so you can create a three-dimensional image of what she has room for and how everything will look to scale.

Because she can visually see her concept and trusts that you will provide her the best service, she gives you the job.

"Many of the jobs I would have never gotten without being able to visualize that event," says Steve Kohn, co-owner of Miller's Rental and Sales in Edison, N.J. "The more information and visuals I can offer, the better chance I have of getting the job."

Tim Maloney, CERP, president of Canton Chair Rental/Scott Costume in Canton, Ohio, agrees. "It [PartyCAD] impresses them. I'm convinced it has made the difference in whether we receive the order because it helps the customer visualize in two or three dimensions. It sets expectations for the customer."

They are not alone. Many party and event rental operators are discovering how PartyCAD can help their businesses. For instance, at Events & Tents in Las Vegas last month, both the basic and expert PartyCAD courses, which Kohn and Maloney

helped conduct, were sold-out.

So why is PartyCAD such a popular addition to rental operations? This is a program "geared to the party industry," Kohn says. "It's a tool that helps you create and sell a job."

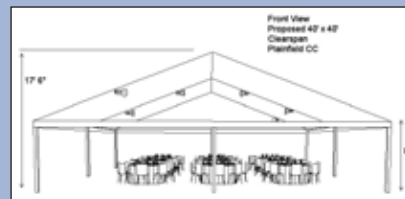
That is an important feature because "a lot of people have a hard time visualizing what an event will look like," says Dan Skena, CERP, president of PartySavvy in Monroeville, Pa. "They can't conceptualize a 40- by 60-foot space. People don't think spatially."

It's a service that gives you a competitive edge, adds David Schroeder, CERP, president of Taylor Rental Center in Ridgewood, N.J. "One corporate customer works with us specifically because of our professional PartyCAD drawings," he says.

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ARA member prompts designer to make program especially for rental operations

When Hank Hufnagel initially designed a computer program in the 1980s that would allow one to see a room setup in a three-dimensional format, it was to help his wife decorate a recently purchased Victorian-era house.



This is a PartyCAD drawing that Steve Kohn, of Miller's Rental and Sales in Edison, N.J., created for an upcoming event.

ought to do something for event design for rental companies."

The rest is history, so to speak.

In 1996, Hufnagel rewrote the

DOS-based code to fit a Windows format and has updated the program every year since, with many of those updates being

the result of rental operators' comments, he notes. Now in its 10th version, the program offers many bells and whistles to help users make elaborate drawings. For more information, go to the PartyCAD home page at www.hufsoft.com or call 814/226-5600.



This publication is a member service of the American Rental Association (ARA). Questions and comments may be directed to Carla Brozick, ARA director of education and training, at carla.brozick@ararental.org or at 800/334-2177, ext. 241.

A publication for ARA members only.



Events & Tents 2008 draws more than 430 attendees for education and networking

More than 430 party and special event rental professionals attended Events & Tents, held Feb. 9-10 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas.

The pre-Show workshop kicked off with a Caribbean-themed tent reception Feb. 9, which featured island sights and sounds including music by Steel Jammin', a steel drum quartet.

Scott Corridan was the opening session speaker on Feb. 10, encouraging rental store personnel to be creative with their rental items in his presentation, "Using Your Inventory in New and Exciting Ways."



Event designer Scott Corridan presented creative ideas for rental inventory during the opening session.

After the opening session were seminars on linens, event décor, handling donations, job costing, etiquette and warehouse design. Afternoon seminars focused on customer service,



Island-themed décor, lighting and music highlighted the Events & Tents opening reception held in a tent on Feb. 9.

power distribution, safety, PartyCAD and color trends. Several seminars related to various aspects of the previous evening's reception were held in the reception tent. Altogether, there were 16 seminars throughout the day.

The Events Task Force plans the Events & Tents program annually, while a group of volunteers assist on site. If you are interested in volunteering for Events & Tents 2009 in Atlanta, contact Kayla Kiesey, ARA meetings and events manager, at kayla.kiesey@ararental.org or 800/334-2177, ext. 230.



A variety of education options were available, including this hands-on linen seminar.

New People

CERP program continues to grow

Below are the latest enrollees in the CERP program:

November

- Grand Rental Station
Prescott Valley, Ariz.
Douglas Gatewood
Paul Solt
- Prescott True Value Hardware
Prescott, Ariz.
Kerry Nagunst
- Vermont Tent Co.
South Burlington, Vt.
Emily Knapp
- Thompson's Rental Shop
Bozeman, Mont.
Brian Spencer
- George's Tool Rental
Hatfield, Pa.
Alan Wismer

December

- The Party Barn, aka Messier
Equipment Rental
Highgate Center, Vt.
Bonnie Messier
- Busylad Rent-All
Tupelo, Miss.
Erin Stubbs

January

- The Alleen Co.
Cincinnati
Layne Butler
Michelle Combs
Stephanie Horn
Erica Robinson-Gripp
Anne Sheehan
- Top Choice Rentals
Kenosha, Wis.
Danielle Talbert
- Marquee Event Group
Austin, Texas
Matti Ravender
- Orcas Events Rentals & Services
Eastsound, Wash.
Veronica San Martin
- All Occasions Event Rental
Cincinnati
Charles Combs
Benjamin Fiehrer
Kevin McLaughlin
William Noble

Stephen Suddendorf
Elizabeth Wilson
Ronald Wissman

February

- Grand Rental Station
Stephenville, Texas
Frank Skidmore
- Austin Party Central
Austin, Texas
Lydia Smith
- A-Lansing Rent-All
Lansing, Mich.
Mary Helfmann
Gary Helfmann
- Rental Network
Squamish, British Columbia, Canada
Dan Barry
Peggy Daniel
Angie Venekamp
- Marquee Event Group
Austin, Texas
Carol Ann Wisely
- Lynchburg True Value
Hardware & Just Ask Rental
Lynchburg, Va.
Kathryn Overstreet
- Party Time Rentals
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Jeff Birchmore
Bradley Johnson
- 4 Tees Rentals & Balloons
Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria
Bolatito Onanuga
- Bravo Events Expos Displays
Buffalo, N.Y.
Thomas Markel
- Uptown Events
Glastonbury, Conn.
David Upton

These rental professionals are discovering the benefits that the CERP program can offer. Find out for yourself how this program can increase knowledge, build confidence and enhance your professionalism.

To enroll, fill out the enclosed form and fax it to ARA at 309/764-1533 or call 800/334-2177, ext. 277.

PartyCAD offers uses for diverse rental applications

Continued from cover story

When many of the rental operators interviewed began using PartyCAD, it was DOS-based, so “all of it had to be done by keystroke,” Skena says. “Now it is Windows-based, which makes it much, much easier to use.”

“Even if you have very little computer knowledge, you can use PartyCAD,” Kohn says. “The key to success is to keep working at it. The more you practice, the better you get.”

The program, which is now available in its 10th version, has become so advanced that you can integrate it with other Windows-based programs, such as Photoshop and Adobe Acrobat, as well as add color and illustrate even the smallest details.

Maloney, whose company serves as the primary rental operation for the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, imported an aerial shot of the entire Hall of Fame layout and then made a CAD drawing that illustrates where everything goes.

Even if you are working in a reception hall, you can import the dimensions of the room to better relate the space with the equipment, Kohn notes.

While Skena and Schroeder offer the drawings as a complimentary service of their businesses, Maloney and Kohn charge for using the resource. Maloney deducts the charge from the overall rental price if the customer chooses his company for the job.

“As a professional service, there should be some fees involved,” Kohn adds. “We should be compensated for our services and labor.”

And labor is involved, all point out. Depending upon the size and details of an event, those interviewed say they can do anywhere from one to 30 different drawings for one job, especially if there are caterers and/or lighting staff involved, or if different perspectives are required.

In addition to providing drawings for their customers, all use them for internal purposes. “We originally used it as a sales tool. Now we use it as much internally as externally,” Schroeder says, noting that it has become a very effective operational tool for his tent crews. For instance, “you can specify that the tent needs to be set up five feet from the tree,” he says.

“It keeps everyone on the same page,” which increases efficiency, Kohn adds. “What you see, everyone sees. You can have it in an electronic format or hard copy.”

In addition to creating drawings for customers and for his crews, Maloney has even used it to better organize his warehouse, noting that the program is useful in many different applications.

So, which businesses should incorporate PartyCAD into their operations? Kohn believes that “anybody that has party or event in their business should have it.”

Maloney is a little more selective. “If you want to grow the party and event niche of your business, then you should consider it, depending on the volume of business and what you do,” he says. “If you just have tables and chairs and no tents, I wouldn’t bother.”

Those who do incorporate it “promote professionalism,” Kohn says. “That is why I like to teach people how to use it. The more professional the industry is, the better.”

Twenty-five graduates of the American Rental Association’s Certified Event Rental Professional

(CERP) program were honored by their peers during ceremonies at Dessert With ARA at **The Rental Show** last month for completing this rigorous program and earning their designation.

Those honored include:

- *Renee Adams*, CERP
Classic Party Rentals — Chicago, McCook, Ill.
- *James Aiken*, CERP
All Occasions Party Rentals Knoxville, Tenn.
- *Tracey Armenakis*, CERP
Taylor Rental Party Plus Palatine, Ill.
- *Stephanie Bowden*, CERP
Evans Equipment Co. Glenwood, Iowa
- *Christi Eidson*, CERP
Red Hat Rentals Fairfield, Texas
- *George Ghanem*, CERP
Creative Events & Rentals/ Taylor Rental, Fort Myers, Fla.
- *Julie Griggs*, CERP
Party Reflections Charlotte, N.C.
- *Paul Hanlon*, CERP
Classic Party Rentals — Chicago, McCook, Ill.
- *Amanda Jones*, CERP
Marquee Linens Austin, Texas
- *Michelle Markham*, CERP
Classic Party Rentals — Chicago, McCook, Ill.
- *Juan Munoz*, CERP
Marquee Tent Productions Austin, Texas
- *Ann Nielsen*, CERP
Austin Party Central



Members of the 2007 Certified Event Rental Professional program class were honored at graduation ceremonies at **The Rental Show**.

Austin, Texas

- *Jodi Orndorff*, CERP
Chantilly General Rental Chantilly, Va.
- *Neal Poulson*, CERP
Marquee Rents Austin, Texas
- *Rob Robben*, CERP
Robin Event Rental Berthoud, Colo.
- *Monica Rodriguez*, CERP
All Occasions Event Rental Cincinnati
- *Al Rothel*, CERP
Creative Events & Rentals/ Taylor Rental Bonita Springs, Fla.
- *Leslie Schleicher*, CERP
Leiser’s, Bethlehem, Pa.
- *David Schroeder*, CERP
Taylor Rental Ridgewood, N.J.
- *Nancy Snell*, CERP
NJS Design & Party Rentals Clinton, Ontario, Canada
- *Rebecca Stoddard*, CERP
Party Reflections Charlotte, N.C.
- *Jeremy Stutzman*, CERP
Creative Events & Rentals/ Taylor Rental, Fort Myers, Fla.
- *Lea-Ann Suzor*, CERP
Festival Tent & Party Rentals Maidstone, Ontario, Canada
- *Patti Weseman*, CERP
Classic Party Rentals — Chicago, McCook, Ill.
- *Jill Zugaj*, CERP
Classic Party Rentals — Chicago, McCook, Ill.

ARA celebrates graduates

Five from Classic Party Rentals — Chicago shared common goal

About a year ago, five employees of Chicago Party Rental, McCook, Ill., enrolled in the Certified Event Rental Professional (CERP) program. Since that time, the company became Classic Party Rentals — Chicago, but the employees' goal to finish the program did not change.

In December, those five employees graduated from the CERP program.

Discover what these graduates acquired by going through the program together:

Renee Adams, CERP

Adams, associate event coordinator, found the *Tabletop Design* discipline especially helpful because one of her duties involves bringing samples of new products to clients and using her linen installation skills to show them the impact linens can have on their event. She says, "I could provide my clients with the knowledge that I had learned."

Adams also uses the techniques learned in the *Introduction to Sales* discipline to make more sales during the slower season.

Paul Hanlon, CERP

Hanlon, event coordinator, had taken several accounting courses in college, but found it "makes a lot more sense," as explained in the CERP materials. He says he gained a better understanding of some of the budgeting and reinvestment dilemmas that management faces.

He also got new ideas from the *Tabletop Design* discipline and wants to put into practice what he learned using movement when decorating the showroom. "It would be fun to have something in the window that was moving," he says.

Michelle Markham, CERP

When Markham, associate event coordinator, started working at Classic Party Rentals almost three years ago, she had no idea it would be "so focused on sales." She says the *Introduction to Sales* discipline helped her in "dealing with a customer who is difficult and learning how to be good in handling conflict."

Overall, she believes that by her and her co-workers graduating from the CERP program,

it will help their clients feel more comfortable working with them. She says clients will "know that we actually went through a process

which involves a lot of training on a lot of different aspects for rentals and we are qualified to be in the positions that we are in."

Patti Weseman, CERP

Weseman pursued the CERP certification to get "knowledge to help in my job." She started at the company in October 2005 and currently works as an event coordinator. A large part of her work involves sales, and she believes that the *Introduction to Sales* discipline aided her in this area.

"I think that I needed more help in making the outbound calls and trying to wrap things up with clients," Weseman says. "I really enjoyed [the *Sales*



Working together was a successful strategy for Classic Party Rentals — Chicago CERP graduates Michelle Markham, Paul Hanlon, Jill Zugaj, Renee Adams and Patti Weseman.

discipline] because that seemed to help me out quite a bit."

Jill Zugaj, CERP

As a senior event coordinator, Zugaj fields "100 calls a day." This aspect of her career gives her many opportunities to use the knowledge gained from the *Introduction to Sales* discipline on "a daily basis."

The *Foundations* discipline also gave her "a more comprehensive understanding of the roots of the rental industry," Zugaj says. "It really puts into perspective how far this industry has come in a short amount of time and then to anticipate where we are going to be in the next 10 to 20 years."

CERP program pays off big for two graduates



Al Rothel, CERP

Most CERP students who take the *Warehouse Management* course only dream of using what they learn to help design a new warehouse. This dream became reality for **Al Rothel**, CERP, and **Jeremy Stutzman**, CERP, of Creative Events & Rentals/Taylor Rental in Fort Myers,

Bonita Springs and Naples, Fla.

Creative Events & Rentals plans to complete its new, 62,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art warehouse in San Carlos, Fla., by the end of April 2008. According to Rothel, division manager — events, the facility, which has 32-foot-high ceilings, will include a dish room, a linen area, an enclosed workshop with a spray booth, enough room to access all chairs easily without having to move other

chairs to get to them and docks that allow loading from the inside.

"The [CERP] books helped me design some of that," says Rothel, who also completed the *Driver Delivery Operations* discipline. "They gave me good ideas and ARA gave me suggestions about other members who I could call to get their opinions on how linen racking should be set up and those kinds of things."

"We get to start fresh in a new place and be able to get it set up right this time versus just trying to reorganize the area we're in now," says Stutzman, event operations director. "I wanted to get some new ideas, which the workbook gave me." The course gave both of them ideas on workflows, setting up racking and on where to locate frequently rented items.

Rothel, who decided "to get CERP-certified to set an exam-

CERP program has something for all party/event rental operators

See how these rental professionals, who graduated in December 2007, are using the knowledge they gained through the CERP program.

Tracey Armenakis, CERP

As co-owner of Taylor Rental Party Plus, Palatine, Ill., Armenakis gained something from each of the disciplines she studied. She took the *Introduction to Sales*



discipline to improve at closing sales. "Once you do some of the things the book

recommended, it's a no-brainer," she says. "People are just ready to sign."

She feels the *Foundations of the Party and Event Rental Industry* discipline probably helped her most, though, by bringing back her "long-lost knowledge of financial statements." She says it taught her how to do the analysis to decide what equipment to buy.

Rob Robben, CERP

Robben, co-owner of Robin Event Rental, Berthoud, Colo., said his 40 years of off-and-on experience in rental made him think that he knew everything there was to know about it until he took a couple of the CERP disciplines.

"Anyone in the event rental business knows a lot about some things and very little about other things," he says. "Through the CERP program, [someone] can get a little bit of knowledge about everything and then build on that."



Robben chose the *Tenting* discipline because he believes

"one of the biggest liabilities in the event rental business is tents," and he was concerned about safety. He says, "I want to make sure that the tents we are putting up are going to be safe for our customers." The *Tenting* discipline helped him learn about safety and more.

James Aiken, CERP

Since Aiken started in the rental business in 1993, he has worked in almost every area. Even with all of this experience,



the CERP program helped by reminding him of the rental basics.

"As we do something for a long time, we keep trying to do things in what we may

think are better ways," Aiken says. "Sometimes the very simple, basic ways that we learned when we first got started are the best, and those are explained in the books."

Now, as director of operations at All Occasions Party Rentals, Knoxville, Tenn., Aiken coaches the employees there "to remember the basics." He also encourages them to become CERP-certified, and six employees have enrolled in the program.

"It's a good motivational tool to get them really interested in the industry and want to learn more," Aiken says.

Nancy Snell, CERP

After finishing the *Warehouse Management* discipline, Snell, owner of NJS Design and Party Rentals, Clinton, Ontario, Canada, redesigned her entire



warehouse.

"Sometimes we get in so deep doing everything we need to do to make our functions happen that we tend to lose sight of the big things like the flow patterns in the warehouse, like hanging linen instead of folding it and little things like that which can make a huge difference," Snell says.

She got involved in the CERP

program to gain "specific industry knowledge." Up until that time, most of her knowledge of the rental industry was from hands-on learning.

"Unless you are in the business, you just don't understand it," she says. "[The CERP program] was nice because it was written by people who are in the industry and understand it."

Her employees have responded very enthusiastically to the changes made since Snell started the CERP program.

Stephanie Bowden, CERP

As an events consultant at Evans Equipment Co. in Glenwood, Iowa, Bowden enjoys planning fun events. She



decided to enroll in the CERP program because she wanted to "learn how to do it and not just guess."

What did Bowden gain from the program? "We can know many things, but seeing ideas on paper and looking at other people's ideas and solutions boosts your own perspective," she says.

Bowden also thinks her CERP certification will show customers that she takes her

Continued on page six

ple," found another advantage to the CERP program in addition to aiding in the design of the new warehouse. He says, "Having the ARA, the library and the CERP training program has helped me tremendously in trying to bring people up to speed quickly and get them all doing the same thing, which is really important when you have three locations."

The CERP material also helps familiarize employees

with rental areas outside their realm of expertise. "You'll have someone who is really good on equipment but doesn't know a lot about linen," Rothel says. "If you give them the linen book, they now know how it's processed and they take more care when the customers bring back the linens to inspect them. It sets a quality standard on what is acceptable to rent and what isn't."

Stutzman also took the *Tent-*

ing discipline to complete the CERP requirements. Tenting was a familiar area to him. Unlike warehouse management, which he has done for only about a year, he says that tenting was a part of his job from "day one."

As if the satisfaction that comes with completing the CERP program and applying its concepts was not enough, George Ghanem, CERP and chief executive officer of Creative Events & Rentals/Taylor

Rental, gave Rothel and Stutzman a further incentive to finish quickly. He told them that if they finished in 2007, he would provide them and their wives an all-expenses-paid trip to **The Rental Show** in Las Vegas.



Jeremy Stutzman, CERP

Do your best to prepare for all outcomes when renting stages

By Bob Wooldridge, claims analyst with ARA Insurance Services

When a customer contacts your store and places an order for a stage, that person normally rents it for a happy occasion. Stages are rented for weddings, receptions, graduations and award ceremonies, to list a few. Everyone is joyous and content at these events until ...

- A woman falls and cuts her leg on the end of the stage.
- A renter assembles the stage and it collapses, injuring several guests. The renter claims a piece of the stage was missing.
- An elderly person steps off a 12-inch-high stage and makes a claim because there wasn't a railing.
- A section of stage falls on a worker while unloading it from the truck.
- A musician falls and suffers injuries while climbing stairs to go on stage.

This column is provided by ARA Insurance Services.



Where You Belong

• A party attendee trips and falls on a "crack" in the stage. What can you do to prepare yourself for these situations? How can you prevent claims like these from being filed against you and your insurance company?

A party rental store should have a solid rental agreement that the customer signs and dates every time he or she rents from you. Maintenance records and Ready-to-Rent tags are a good idea because they show a track record of past rents and any problems or lack of problems. Employees who deliver and set up stages need to be properly trained to prevent mishaps. If a renter is going to set up the stage, there should be clear instructions and a checklist of delivered items.

Sometimes you cannot prevent claims from being made, no matter what you do. Remember, just because a claim has been made, this does not mean you are automatically liable. Be sure that you turn the claim in to your insurance company as soon as possible so the loss can be investigated properly.

Graduates use the knowledge gained through the CERP program

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career seriously and is "not just another salesperson trying to sell them stuff."

Lea-Ann Suzor, CERP

Suzor, co-owner and general manager of Festival Tent and Party Rentals in Maidstone, Ontario, Canada, wanted to become CERP-

certified "to stay up with industry standards.

"I think it is good that there is a standard that people in our industry have to reach," she says. "Otherwise, there are no regulations on this industry whatsoever."

Suzor also thinks that it gives a "little more credence to the qualifications of the company" to be able to tell customers, "We have a certified event rental professional here on staff."

According to Suzor, taking the *Warehouse Management* discipline provided "an opportunity to learn things about an area I didn't already know about and an area that I do the least amount of work in."



Rebecca Stoddard, CERP

Before becoming an account relations and event

consultant at Party Reflections in Charlotte, N.C., Stoddard worked as an accountant. She says, "I had earned my CPA certification then, so to be able to earn another professional designation in this industry was very important to me to show my commitment."

Interestingly, Stoddard had the opportunity to help a client plan one of the various cultural celebrations she just had learned about in the *Tabletop Design* discipline. "[The course] gave me a little bit of background to help them plan it and recommend items accordingly," she says.

Julie Griggs, CERP

Despite having just graduated in December, Griggs already has applied the knowledge gained from the *Introduction to Sales* discipline in her sales position at Party Reflections in Charlotte, N.C.

"I learned a lot about customer relations and the best way to

deal with customers," she says. "I've been able to apply a little of what I learned about dealing



with difficult customers, and I'm more proactive at trying to avoid incidences."

Griggs definitely wants to "learn more as to what the CERP program has to offer, even though I'm already certified," she says.

Amanda Jones, CERP

As a linen specialist for Marquee Linens in Austin, Texas, Jones had experience with purchasing linens, but the *Tabletop Design* discipline helped show her how to use the linens that she buys.

"I feel more confident about setting up a table or doing a demo for people now," Jones says. "I know exactly where the forks go and how to place the



glasses on the table. Instead of just laying linen on the table, I can do the whole thing now."

Jones also took the *Introduction to Sales* discipline. "I needed to grow in that area because linen is a form of marketing and I deal with customers," she says. "I feel better about approaching people and now know how to approach them."

Christi Eidson, CERP

When Eidson first started working at Red Hat Rentals in Fairfield, Texas, four years ago,

she admits, "I knew nothing about the rental industry."

Since finishing the CERP program, she now says she can confidently tell customers, "Whatever you come to me and say you want done, I can do that."

One of the key points from the *Introduction to Sales* discipline was how to upsell. "I learned how to present things to people to get what they wanted out of their event," she explains.

The *Tabletop Design* discipline also familiarized her with various equipment and different trends. She now feels more confident serving her customers.