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Community Helps Student Military Couple Win Dream Wedding

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – On Valentine’s Day, two Cedarville University seniors were feeling the love from classmates, faculty and staff as they won an all-expenses-paid military wedding giveaway.

ROTC member Sam Quattrone, a senior exercise science major from Lakewood, New York, and his fiancée, Katie Carmichael, a senior business management major from Traverse City, Michigan, were among 15 couples in contention for the dream wedding package at Castle Farms in Charlevoix, Michigan.

Voting started Feb. 6 and continued until 11:59 p.m. on Feb 13. The couple asked close friends and family to vote, but word spread quickly across campus and soon hundreds of students, faculty and staff were voting for the couple. On Valentine’s Day, Feb. 14, Castle Farms announced Carmichael and Quattrone the winners.

The package will allow the Cedarville couple a wedding with 150 guests and includes catering, entertainment, flowers, photography, hair and makeup, an officiant and accommodations for their wedding night. The prizes were provided by businesses around Charlevoix and sponsored by the Michigan country music radio station WTCM.

The wedding prize completely turned around the couple’s expectations about their upcoming nuptials. Because Quattrone starts U.S. Army infantry training in early June, and then U.S. Army Ranger school immediately after, their minimal plans for a ceremony were scaled back even further. Until the announcement from Castle Farms on Valentine’s Day.

“Winning this contest is more to us than just a free wedding, it’s a sign of God’s faithfulness and provision,” Carmichael said. “Two weeks ago we found out that Sam’s report date was a lot sooner than we thought, so we went from the little wedding plans we had established back down to zero. We felt a little defeated, but we moved on and looked ahead. Now, in a matter of one week, we went from changing plans and nothing established to a free wedding and a list of wedding vendors to call. God is faithful.”

The couple found the contest while looking for wedding venues in Michigan. Castle Farms was at the top of their list, but out of their price range. One of the employees at Castle Farms informed them about the contest, and they submitted their entry.

On campus, students informed others in their classes to vote, passed out fliers and shared posts on Facebook. The student government association (SGA) got involved by posting on social media and spreading the word. Even Cedarville University president Dr. Thomas White posted about the contest on social media and made an unofficial announcement in chapel the final day of voting.

“It’s difficult to describe how incredible it was to see the campus support,” said Carmichael. “We had people we didn’t even know coming up to us saying they were sharing and voting! We had friends all over posting on social media sites, handing out flyers, sharing with their friends and family from home and even the women’s basketball team shared on their social media platforms. It absolutely blew up as the week went on. Sam and I knew that even if we lost that we were so blessed by the Cedarville community and everyone coming together to support us.”

Carmichael, a student assistant with the Cedarville women’s basketball team, was traveling with the team on the way back from a game and Quattrone was away at a U.S. Army conference in Kansas when the contest ended.

“As we counted down to 11:59 p.m, I started to cry knowing that we secured the lead and had won,” said Carmichael. “It’s a feeling that I can’t explain well, but let’s just say it’s a mixture of being overwhelmed by the support and encouragement we’ve had over this week along with a sigh of relief for it being over.”

“As of now, we have been doing our best to show how grateful and thankful we are by reaching out to everyone who voted and shared and encouraged us along the way,” said Quattrone. “It’s hard to express how much this means to us, and especially how much it has encouraged us and pointed us to Christ. We hope that through this, others too can see the faithfulness of God as we strive to point this back to him.”

The couple will graduate in early May and get married a few weeks later. Quattrone will report for his next phase of training in early June, and the couple will move to Georgia where Quattrone will start his infantry officer training and attend U.S. Army Ranger school. Carmichael plans to find a business-related job in Georgia, and they will spend their first year of marriage there before they are assigned to a more permanent duty station.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,963 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.