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In Sickness and in Health: Students Plan Weddings Amidst COVID

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Most married couples can recall stories of stress from the wedding-planning process, especially those who planned their big days while in college. But for the many recently engaged couples at Cedarville University, COVID has eclipsed the challenges of ongoing academic commitments.

Kindra Lawson, a junior biblical studies major from Mt. Sterling, Kentucky; Alayna Skurdal, a junior graphic design major from Snohomish, Washington; Emily Greenhouse, a junior nursing major from Danville, California; Katelynn Allwood, a pharmacy graduate student from Wheelersburg, Ohio; and Emily Davis, a senior early education major from Wilmington, Ohio, are among those Cedarville students currently planning their weddings amidst the pandemic.

Each woman has encountered unique planning challenges due to COVID, and yet these brides' creative problem-solving skills are ensuring that, come wedding day, they'll be able to say "I do." Even if it is through a mask.

Skurdal's marriage to junior pre-med microbiology major Mark Rowan of Chickamauga, Georgia, is scheduled for May 8, 2021. Alongside participating in Cedarville's [Fit-To-Be-Tied premarital counseling program](#) with Rowan, she is also planning her service and reception, which will take place in her backyard in Snohomish, Washington.

"The only thing I ever wanted for my wedding day was a party," she shared. "Things may be smaller than I hoped for, but Mark and I both have huge immediate families, so they'll really help. And at the end of the day, if nothing else goes right, Mark and I will be together, and we'll be married. That's what matters most."

Lawson, who will marry sophomore worship major Caleb Stanton of Ypsilanti, Michigan, on July 24, is planning on a church ceremony and backyard reception.

"Though we don't really have a contingency plan for the ceremony, what's comforting is that most of what I'm excited for goes beyond the actual wedding," Lawson said. "Things like making our registry, searching for apartments and planning our honeymoon are what remind me that whether it's in front of a huge amount of family and friends, or it's just us and our parents, what's important is that we start our lives together."

Allwood, who will be married on June 12 this year, decided with her fiancé, senior psychology major Justin Webster of Springfield, Ohio, to have only immediate family members at her church wedding.

"It was something that we could plan for without compromising the efforts that family and friends have put into staying safe during this pandemic," she noted. "It took a few days to come to terms with our decision, but I knew that it was the best for us and those that we would want to be there."

Greenhouse, engaged to Caleb Tiffan, a junior mechanical engineering major from Windsor, Colorado, has been unable thus far to select a wedding date or venue due to restrictions in her home state of California.

“We’re hoping to find an outdoor venue close to a church, but venues in California haven’t been able to share solid details or commit to anything because of COVID,” Greenhouse said. “So far, I have my dress and the caterers figured out, so if the world falls apart, we get married at a courthouse and eat Mexican food.”

Davis, who has accomplished much in preparation for her May 2 wedding to Luke Brittan, a graduate student from Mattawan, Michigan, in Cedarville’s Master of Divinity program, encountered one of her biggest obstacles while planning the reception desserts.

“One problem we encountered was about one of the most important parts — the dessert!” she shared. “We are planning to have Bill’s donuts for dessert, but the last I checked, they were closed due to COVID. Hopefully, they will be back open in time for the wedding.”

Despite the challenges of planning a pandemic wedding, these women have found joy and excitement in the process, wading through difficulties with creativity and grace in anticipation of the days they’ll say their vows. And nothing, not even COVID-19, can dampen their enthusiasm for the big day.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation, and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Written by Heidie Raine