

# LAKE SIDE

Spring 2025

## 2025 *Bridal* guide

**Inside this issue:**  
Get to know your local  
jeweler, a new Lexington  
County venue and more



# about lakeside

Lakeside is a seasonal magazine distributed throughout Lexington County and around Lake Murray, as well as to all Lexington County Chronicle subscribers. To have your business included in the next edition of Lakeside, contact [advertising@lexingtonchronicle.com](mailto:advertising@lexingtonchronicle.com).

We hope this magazine helps you in celebrating and enjoying the Lake Murray area this spring.

*Thank you!*

for engaging in our community.



## about the cover

Heron Hill Venue  
is located at 3162  
Augusta Hwy. in  
Gilbert, S.C.

photo by I KYLIE MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY

## our team

PUBLISHER  
Vince Johnson

WRITERS  
Sophia Sousa

PUBLICATION DESIGN  
ADVERTISING / GRAPHIC  
DESIGN  
Cary Howard

SALES AND MARKETING  
Kelly Mason  
[kelly@lexingtonchronicle.com](mailto:kelly@lexingtonchronicle.com)

EDITOR  
Bryn Eddy  
[bryn@lexingtonchronicle.com](mailto:bryn@lexingtonchronicle.com)

Copywrite 2025, Community Media Group, LLC  
P.O. Box 9, Lexington, S.C. 29071-0009  
Phone (803) 359-7633

Member of the South Carolina Press Association,  
International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors  
and the National Newspaper Association



# contents

## Stay Here, Play Here

Local events for  
April - June

4



## Finding the ring

Downtown Lexington  
jeweler talks diamond  
alternatives, love of  
custom-made pieces

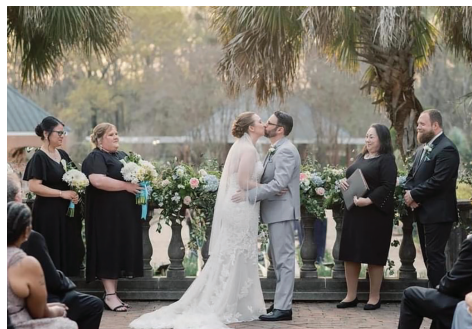
6



## Area brides

Local newlywed and  
soon-to-be newlywed  
talk planning

14



## Midlands officiant

Meet the kind of  
officiant that just wants  
to know you love each  
other

18



## Ever considered a local honeymoon?

20

Here's a Midlands  
itinerary

# Stay here, play here

Midlands events for April - June

## April

### SATURDAY, APRIL 5

#### 13th Annual Herb Festival

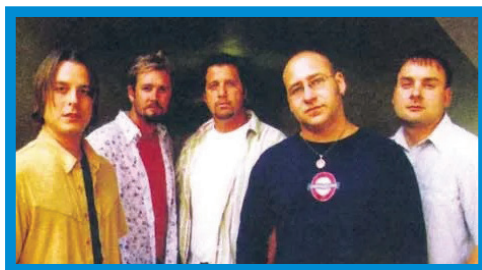
If you like a little spice in your life, head over to the Lexington County Museum (231 Fox St.) for the 13th Annual Herb Festival. You'll find more than 100 types of herbs and plants for sale, herbal mini-demonstrations, food vendors on site and a bake sale that runs throughout the event. The Herb Festival is presented by the Herb Bunch of Lexington and runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event is free to attend. Visit [lexingtonsc.org/community-event/13th-annual-herb-festival](http://lexingtonsc.org/community-event/13th-annual-herb-festival) for more information.

### TUESDAY, APRIL 8

#### The Farmer's Table

The Farm 1780 (1127 Corley Mill Rd.) hosts a seafood feast at its farm-to-table meal series, The Farmer's Table. Join Chef Brian Nelson as he creates a three-course seafood meal with all food sourced locally. Enjoy a delicious meal in the Farm 1780's intimate farmhouse. Seating is limited to 20, and admission is \$100. The Farmer's Table runs from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Visit [thefarm1780.com](http://thefarm1780.com) for more information.

Amphitheater (107 W. Main St.). This veteran group has been wowing crowds with a high-energy mix of covers and originals for decades, making them a perfect fit for an outdoor show in warm weather. Showtime is 6:30 p.m., and the band plays until 9:30 p.m. Admission is free. Visit [icehouseamphitheater.com](http://icehouseamphitheater.com) for more information.



### SATURDAY, APRIL 11

#### Sister Hazel (concert)

The Icehouse Amphitheater (107 W. Main St.) welcomes rockers Sister Hazel back to the stage. The band initially achieved platinum success thanks to its hit single, "All for You," but its staying power comes from a fiercely dedicated group of fans known as the Hazel Nuts. Showtime is 6 p.m., and the band plays until 10 p.m. Tickets are \$32. Visit [icehouseamphitheater.com](http://icehouseamphitheater.com) for more information.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 25

#### On the Border: The Ultimate Eagles Tribute (concert)

You might not be able to get tickets for the Eagles farewell tour, but you can head to the Icehouse Amphitheater (107 W. Main St.) for an up-close and personal performance by On the Border: The Ultimate Eagles Tribute. You'll hear classics like "Hotel California," "Take It Easy" and "Desperado," all performed with breathtaking five-part harmonies and recreated with precision. Showtime is 6 p.m., and admission is \$20. Visit [icehouseamphitheater.com](http://icehouseamphitheater.com) for more information.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 26

The Irmo International Festival will be held at the Moore Park (7473 Church St. Irmo) from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission and parking are free. There

will be a large number of vendors with food, arts, crafts, clothing, jewelry, candles, decor, services, Henna, fortune telling and more. There will also be a full day of musical stage entertainment, an International Car Show and a Kids -Teen Zone with many free activities including face painting, balloon art, Bouncy houses, games and a 1967 Cobra helicopter.



### The Tams (concert)

The Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College (7300 College Blvd.) presents classic beach music from The Tams. Expect highlights from five decades of music, including hits like "Be Young, Be Foolish, Be Happy," "What Kind of Fool" and "Hey Girl Don't Bother Me." Showtime is 7:30 p.m., and tickets are \$40 for general admission and \$35 for seniors, military and students with ID. Visit [harbisontheatre.org](http://harbisontheatre.org) for more information.

## May

### FRIDAY, MAY 2

#### Rockin' With a Mission (concert)

Listen to some tropical tunes and donate to a good cause at the Icehouse Amphitheater (107 W. Main St.). Rockin' With a Mission presents a night of Jimmy Buffett music courtesy of Captain Mike & The Shipwrecked, a Jimmy Buffett cover band. Proceeds go to Mission Lexington, which helps families and individuals with essentials like food, clothing, shelter and financial assistance. This event runs from 6 to 9 p.m., and admission is \$15. Visit [icehouseamphitheater.com](http://icehouseamphitheater.com) for more information.



### THURSDAY, APRIL 10

#### The Root Doctors (concert)

The Root Doctors, one of South Carolina's most popular party bands, return to the Icehouse





### **SATURDAY, MAY 3**

Katt Williams (comedy)

Comedian Katt Williams brings his scathing observations and gut-busting punchlines to Colonial Life Arena (801 Lincoln St.) on his "Heaven on Earth" tour. Visit [coloniallifearena.com](http://coloniallifearena.com) for showtime, ticket pricing and other information.

### **FRIDAY, MAY 9**

Guitar Stories (concert)

The Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College (7300 College Blvd.) hosts "Guitar Stories," an event created by local guitarist Terence Young and performed by his band, The Terence Young Experience. Throughout the evening, Young plays urban jazz grooves to a breathtaking dance recital, fusing street and stage. Showtime is 8 p.m., and tickets cost between \$40 and \$50. Visit [harbisontheatre.org](http://harbisontheatre.org) for more information.



### **FRIDAY, MAY 16**

Jerry Seinfeld (standup)

The Township Auditorium (1703 Taylor St.) welcomes comedian, author and actor Jerry Seinfeld. This show will likely sell out, so act quickly to get tickets. Showtime is 7 p.m., and tickets cost between \$57.50 and \$400. Visit [thetownship.org](http://thetownship.org) for more information.



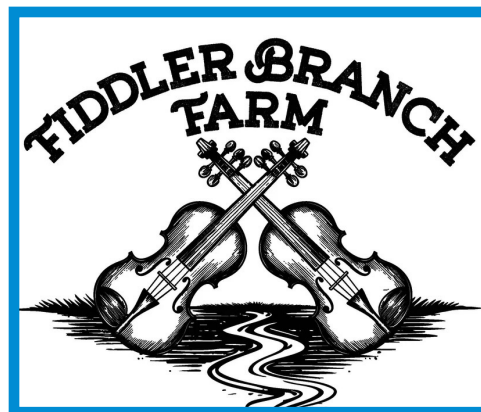
### **SATURDAY, MAY 17**

South Carolina Food Truck & Beer Festival  
The SC State Fairgrounds (1200 Rosewood Dr.) invites you to the South Carolina Food Truck & Beer Festival. Thirty-five of the area's most popular food trucks will serve favorites like fresh lobster rolls, gourmet mini donuts, giant egg rolls, wood-fired pizza and Jamaican cuisine. The festival also features dozens of regional and national craft brews. This event runs from noon to 5 p.m. Visit [facebook.com/FTFofAmerica](http://facebook.com/FTFofAmerica) for ticket prices and other information.

### **WEDNESDAY, MAY 21**

JJ Grey & MOFRO/The Marshall Tucker Band (concert)

The Township Auditorium (1703 Taylor St.) welcomes Southern rock stalwarts The Marshall Tucker Band and Florida swamp-groovers JJ Grey & MOFRO to Columbia. Showtime is 7:15 p.m., and tickets cost between \$49 and \$69. Visit [thetownship.org](http://thetownship.org) for more information.



### **SATURDAY, MAY 24**

2025 Spring Bluegrass Festival  
Fiddler Branch Farm (232 Fiddler Branch Rd.) invites you to its 2025 Spring Bluegrass Festival. Authentic Unlimited, the 2024 IBMA Vocal Group of the Year, headlines the show, with sets by Starlett Boswell, Wilson Banjo Co., No Name Bluegrass Band and The Millhands. The festival runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and admission is \$20. Visit [martinsvintagemusic.com/pages/bluegrass](http://martinsvintagemusic.com/pages/bluegrass) for more information.

June



### **SUNDAY, JUNE 1**

Midlands Family Expo  
The Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center (1101 Lincoln St.) hosts the Midlands Family Expo from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The expo features family-friendly programs, services and community resources designed to help families make informed decisions. Kids of all ages can enjoy free airbrush face painting, balloon animals, an obstacle course, crafts and more. This event is free to attend. Visit [columbiaconventioncenter.com](http://columbiaconventioncenter.com) for more information.



### **Midlands Men's Chorus (concert)**

The Reformation Lutheran Church (1118 Union St.) presents a performance by the Midlands Men's Chorus in honor of Pride Month. The chorus will perform a variety of tunes from pop to standards from the Great American Songbook. Showtime is 4 p.m., and this performance is free to attend. Visit [midlandsmenschorus.com](http://midlandsmenschorus.com) for more information.

### **THURSDAY, JUNE 5**

South Carolina Caribbean Festival  
The Granary Event Center (2638 Two Notch Rd.) hosts the 12th annual South Carolina Caribbean Festival, a four-day event filled with food, music and island vibes. The festival kicks off at 7 p.m., and tickets cost between \$180 and \$245 for multi-day packages. Visit [facebook.com/SouthCarolinaCarnival](http://facebook.com/SouthCarolinaCarnival) for more information.





Downtown Lexington  
jeweler talks diamond  
alternatives, love of  
custom-made pieces

He'll make  
any option  
*shine*

Words and photos by Bryn Eddy



Jerry Crady proposed to his wife, Jennifer, with an engagement ring he made.

It was after an Angels game in California that he got down on one knee to present the ring, which incorporated diamonds from Jennifer's grandmother and Jerry's grandmother.

He laughs remembering the first time he met her. It was at a friend's wedding. She was picking on him for not matching his shoes to his suit. "I thought it looked good together," he laughed.

Now owner of Jeweler's Studio in downtown Lexington near St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, Jerry creates custom pieces for locals day after day.

Donning the magnifying visor and leather apron like that of a blacksmith, Jerry says creating custom pieces is his favorite part of the job. He sits among his tools, listening to EDM, fully taking advantage of the introverted side of his job.

Regardless of what Jeweler's Studio patrons visit the local establishment for, they're greeted with familiar faces, each with years of experience.

Jerry himself has almost 25 years' experience, while Pam Taylor has almost 20 years' experience.

She and Jerry have worked together for a long time, and like small business employees are used to, Pam's job description is essentially whatever needs to be done outside of making the jewelry.

Alongside creating custom pieces, the business also performs services including repairs and gold buying, and that's often where Pam comes in.

She's the local, smiling face patrons are first greeted by and a source of knowledge for things like the four Cs.

"There are four Cs when it comes to diamonds," she said. "That is cut, clarity, color and carat weight."

Together, Pam and Jerry help locals, many of whom are lovebirds planning a

soon-coming proposal, find the piece that works best for them.

Sometimes, that entails diamond alternatives, such as lab-made or moissanite.

"Moissanite is a naturally occurring crystal made from silicon carbide that is used as an inexpensive alternative to diamonds," according to a 2023 article on VRAI.com. "Natural moissanite is incredibly rare. Most moissanite on the market today is man-made."

Moissanite rings and lab-made diamonds are growing in popularity. Some prefer them for their price, while others prefer them for their more-ethical sourcing, considering the dangers of mining and its negative impacts on the environment and the miners themselves.

"We've seen a lot more lab-diamond sales, especially in the past like five years," Jerry said. "They're more affordable than a natural."

A one-carat natural is about \$6,700, according to Pam, while a one-carat lab is \$1,000. Finally, a one-carat moissanite is \$450.

Lab diamonds and natural diamonds are the same on a hardness scale, Jerry said, whereas a moissanite stone would be slightly less hard, but a relatively negligible difference.

In short, whether someone is wearing a natural, lab-made or moissanite, they would have a hard time damaging it and a hard time telling one type of gem from the other.

Jerry and Pam can help Lexington locals find which option works best for them, and make it shine regardless of which type.

But again, it's only one of the services Jeweler's Studio, located at 600 W. Main St., offers.

Locally minded and locally run with a homey atmosphere, Jerry most enjoys making the custom pieces, especially for Jennifer, for whom he still often makes things, the most recent being a pendant he won a design competition for.







# VENUES TO HOST YOUR BIG DAY

Words by Sophia Sousa

I hear wedding bells! Are you searching for the perfect spot to tie the knot in Lexington County? Check out these venues for your big day:

## Corley Mill House & Gardens



JESSICA ROBERTS PHOTOGRAPHY



Located at 221 Corley Mill Rd. in Lexington, Corley Mill House & Gardens has hosted events since 1997, offering both indoor and outdoor spaces. The 1908 Edwardian-era Corley Mill House was expanded in 2001 with a banquet hall and garden.

### Rental rates:

- Monday through Thursday: \$3,995
- Friday and Sunday: \$4,395
- Saturday: \$5,195
- Discounts are available for off-peak months (January and February) and weekday weddings.

Rentals include up to 200 ceremony chairs, 120 banquet chairs, 12 60-inch banquet tables, six cocktail tables, 18 linens, an hour of rehearsal time, setup, breakdown and cleanup. A wedding director is available for \$400, unless the couple has their own planner. Bartenders cost \$250/hour for up to five hours. The bridal suite includes a full-length mirror, an upholstered chair, mini chandeliers, a large fridge, two restrooms for the bridal party, luncheon trays and adjustable seats for hair and makeup.





# Heron Hill Venue



Located at 3162 Augusta Hwy. in Gilbert, Heron Hill Venue hosts weddings, private gatherings and corporate events. Couples can choose from outdoor or indoor ceremony and reception spaces, with the indoor space accommodating up to 175 guests.

## Rental rates:

- Tuesday through Thursday: \$5,000
- Friday and Sunday: \$5,000
- Saturday: \$6,300
- "Day-of" liability insurance is required.

The Friday and Saturday package allows use of the venue from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturday. This package costs \$8,500. The weekend package includes venue use from 1 p.m. until 9 p.m. on Friday, 9 a.m. until 11 p.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. on Sunday. This package costs \$10,500.

Inclusions in the weekend package:

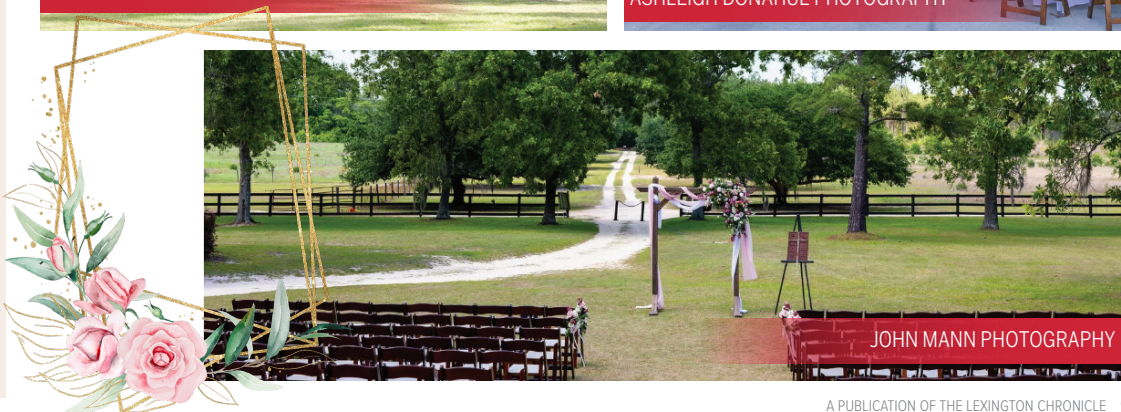
- 4,000-square-foot venue with a covered porch
- Seating for 150 to 250 guests
- 200 resin wood cross-back chairs
- 12 8-foot farmhouse tables
- 15 60-inch round tables
- 300 outdoor ceremony chairs
- 10 cocktail tables
- Parking attendants and more

Located at 125 Kittal Rd. in Lexington, Twelve Oaks Estate offers Southern charm for weddings. The venue includes the Grand Manor, a 19th-century home and multiple ceremony locations, such as the front lawn, fields, the Pasture by Dolly House and the Cherry Blossom Lawn.

## Pricing:

- Acres package (Friday/Sunday: \$5,651, Saturday: \$6,651) – Includes a 10-hour rental, six cocktail tables, 15 60-inch tables, 150 ceremony chairs, 150 reception chairs, bridal photoshoot (photographer not included), ceremony rehearsal and one extra site visit.
- Oak Wedding package (Friday/Sunday: \$7,653, Saturday: \$8,653) – Includes a 10-hour rental, tables, three buffet tables, chairs, bridal shoot, ceremony rehearsal, day-of coordinator, one extra site visit, photographer for five hours, DJ and digital photo booth.
- Estate package (Friday/Sunday: \$11,137, Saturday: \$12,137) – Includes everything in the Oak Wedding package with extended time with photographer and extra site visits.

# Twelve Oaks Estate





# Hidden Creek Stables

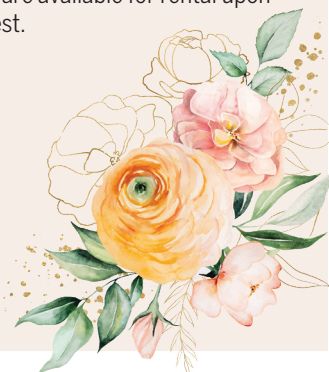


Located at 1122 Rawl Rd. in Lexington, Hidden Creek Stables sits on 20 acres and hosts weddings, corporate events, birthday parties and more.

A day-of liability insurance is required. Rental from Friday to Sunday: \$3,000

The venue offers:

- 1,600 sq. ft. reception area with a covered patio
- 100 mahogany chairs, 12 60-inch round tables
- Bridal suite with lounge, bathroom and makeup station
- Access to property for bridal portraits with horses
- Five-hour rehearsal dinner: \$500
- Additional chairs, tables, tents and more are available for rental upon request.



# Southern Oaks Wedding and Event Venue

Located at 2401 US-378 in Gilbert, Southern Oaks offers a range of wedding services, including bridal suites, ceremony areas and a reception space.

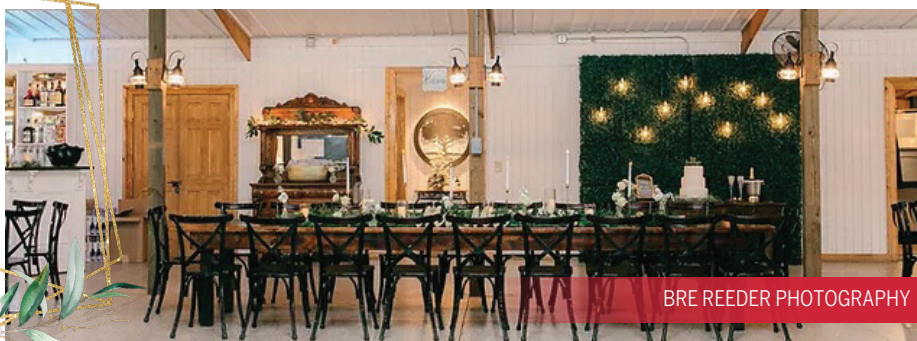
There is also a lady's loft, coffee room, family room and groom's room for wedding parties and family to get ready and relax.

Pricing:

- Monday-Thursday: starting at \$2,500
- Friday: \$4,500
- Saturday: \$5,000
- Sunday: \$3,500
- Off-season discount: 15% off in January, February, July and August.

Packages:

- Southern Charm (\$3,500): Includes ceremony and reception decorations, planner meeting and setup/cleanup.
- Southern Elegance (\$5,500): Includes everything in Southern Charm plus extra perks.





# The Vines of Lexington



STEE GARMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Located at 394 Walter Raul Rd. near Lexington, The Vines offers indoor or outdoor venues at a five-acre vineyard. Micro wedding: Costs \$1,995, with a maximum guest capacity of 40. Inclusions in this package are 1.5 hours of event time with one hour of getting-ready time, a two-tier cake and beverages, decorated event space with setup and teardown services. An additional reception hour costs \$500.

Premium wedding: Cost varies depending on the month and day of the week.

- April to November:
  - o Monday-Thursday: \$5,495
  - o Friday and Sunday: \$5,995
  - o Saturday: \$6,495

- December to March:
  - o Monday-Thursday: \$4,495
  - o Friday and Sunday: \$4,995
  - o Saturday: \$5,495

The premium package includes 50 guests, with a maximum of 147. Additional guests over 50 cost \$25 per person. This includes a catered buffet meal and wedding cake

with cutting service, décor planning, use of décor, setup and teardown, cleanup and trash service. An additional reception hour costs \$500, and fresh florals are available.

Venue-only package:

- April to November:
  - o Monday-Thursday: \$2,995
  - o Friday and Sunday: \$3,495
  - o Saturday: \$3,995

- December to March:
  - o Monday-Thursday: \$1,995
  - o Friday and Sunday: \$2,495
  - o Saturday: \$2,995

The Venue-only package includes a maximum of 147 guests, 4.5 hours of event time with property access at 10 a.m., use of ceremony and reception spaces (bridal and groom suites), chairs, tables, tablecloths and setup and teardown services, staff-assisted parking and on-site support, a one-hour rehearsal, and a one-hour portrait session. An additional reception hour is offered for \$500, and a décor package for \$795.

## Trusted to make it PERFECT by over 4000 brides!



Photo by Nikki Morgan Photography

7565 St Andrews Rd  
803 732-7950

## AMERICAN FLORAL

AmericanFloralSC.com





# LAKE MURRAY

boat ramps and marinas

## NEWBERRY

1

**Kempson Boat Ramp**  
2822 SC-395

## PROSPERITY

2

**RiverWinds Landing**  
221 State Route 391

8

**Buffalo Creek Marina**  
849 Marina Way

9

**Billy Dreher Island Ramp**  
224 Sassafras Lane

10

**Crayne's Landing**  
26 Crayne's Loop

## LEESVILLE

4

**Big Mans Marina**  
125 Big Mans Road

5

**River Bend Boat Ramp**  
734 Riverbend Point

6

**Lake Murray Shores  
Boat Ramp**  
1 Robbins Street

7

**Acapulco USA**  
960 Rock North Creek Road

11

**Hollow Creek Marina**  
3340 Hwy 378

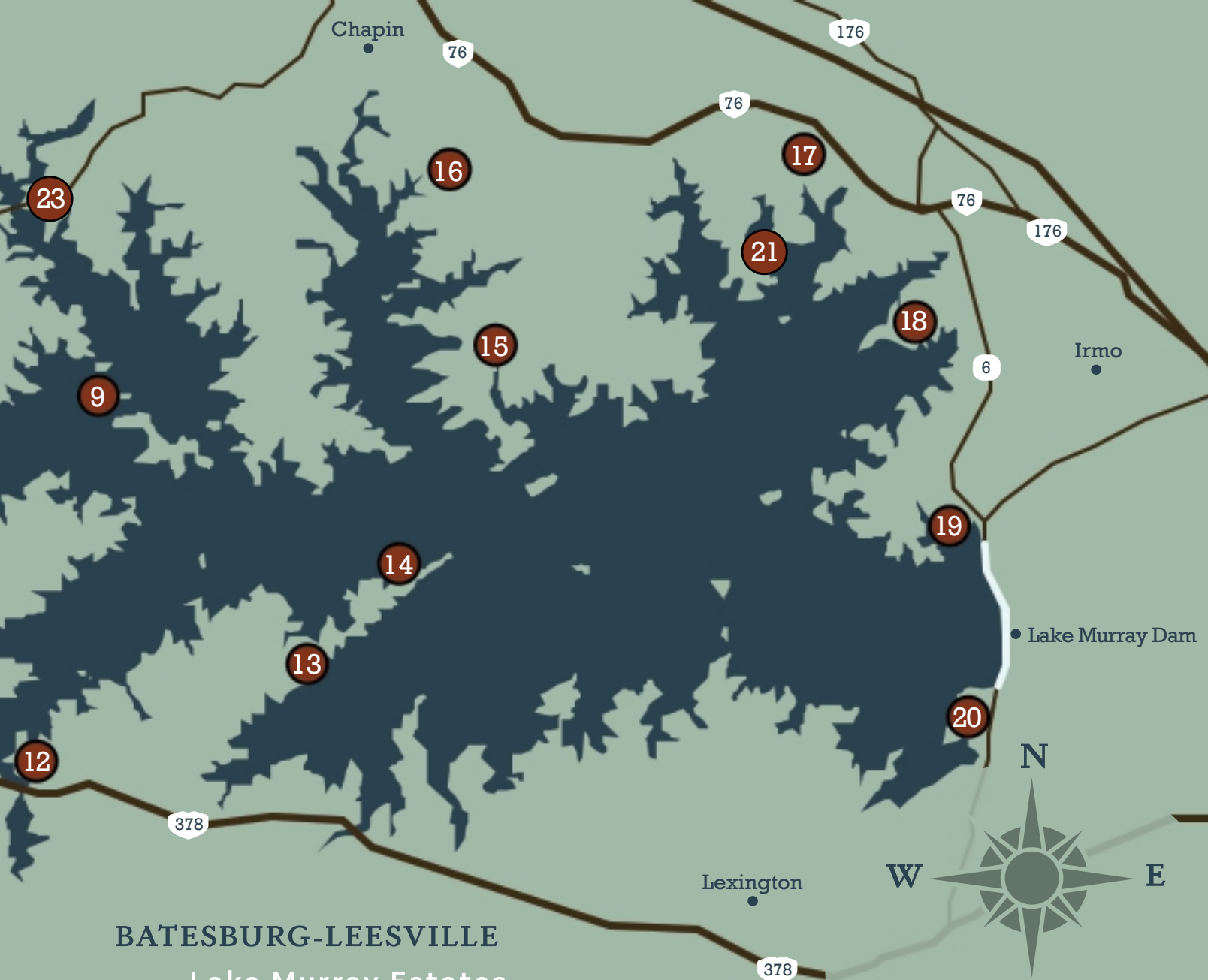
12

**Southshore Marina**  
3072 Hwy 378

22

**Lake Murray Resort and Marina**  
101 Sandalwood Road





## BATESBURG-LEESVILLE

3

**Lake Murray Estates Boat Ramp**  
394 Ruby Riser Road

## CHAPIN

15

**Hilton Recreation Area**  
Cove Launch Court

16

**Eptings Landing**  
433 Eptings Camp Road

21

**Lighthouse Marina**  
1925 Johnson Marina Rd

23

**Fat Frogs Marina**  
1701 Dreher Island Road

## IRMO

17

**Shealy's Landing**  
320 Shadowood Drive

## COLUMBIA

18

**Rocky Point Boat Ramp**  
411 Rocky Point Drive

19

**Lake Murray Dam Ramp**  
6 SC-6

## GILBERT

14

**Larry Koon Landing**  
1523 Shull Avenue

13

**Public Boat Ramp**  
1523 Shull Avenue

## LEXINGTON

20

**Jake's Landing**  
220 Jakes Landing Road





Wedding  
♡♡

# *Lexington brides*

share how their weddings are made possible by local businesses and more

Words by Catharine Barone  
Photos Provided

It's many girls' dream to fall in love, get engaged and plan the wedding of their dreams. No matter how big or small the wedding is, the heart behind many brides is to create a special day celebrating the start of marriage.





# Mrs. Krissy Salvagin Calvert

Lexington native, Krissy Calvert, got engaged to her now husband, Chase Calvert, in June 2024. After meeting Chase while in school at Clemson University and being in love with each other for eight years, she didn't waste any time when it came to planning their special day, which took place on Feb. 22, 2025.

When choosing a location for the wedding, Krissy and Chase chose to have their wedding in Lexington at her childhood church, Corpus Christi Catholic Church.

"With being a graduate from Lexington High School and growing up in Lexington, it just made sense to start this new chapter of my life here in my hometown," Krissy said. "It's very special to be planning our wedding in Lexington and is really a full circle moment for me."

Krissy and Chase chose to have their reception at the new Heron Hill wedding venue, located right off of Augusta Highway.

"I totally fell in love with Heron Hill," Krissy said. "The venue was gorgeous and offered great amenities. After having the first tour at Heron Hill, I canceled all my other tours with different venues. We immediately secured our spot to host our reception, I knew there was no other place that could top Heron Hill."

When it came to looking for the additional vendors, Krissy was well pleased with all the different local vendors within Lexington and the

surrounding area.

"Kristen, the Heron Hill owner, gave us great recommendations for local vendors," she said. "All of our Lexington Vendors have been the best to work with!"

Krissy went with Studio B for hair and makeup, Elite Bar Services for signature cocktails, Hudson's Classic Catering for the food and Melissa G Photography to capture their big day.

Even though she had been looking forward to planning her special day with Chase for a while, she said she wasn't fully prepared for what all went into planning a wedding.

"I knew a lot went into planning a wedding, but I guess you never really know until you're in it," Krissy said. "Even though it is a lot of planning, it has been a really awesome bonding project for my mom and I!"

All the planning paid off, and Krissy became Mrs. Calvert at their beautiful wedding on Feb. 22, 2025.

When asked about what advice she would give a bride who is planning a wedding, Krissy shared

to enjoy every moment of the process.

"Embrace the process! You only do it once, so do it right! Everyone wants that perfect Pinterest wedding, but all the personal touches that you can incorporate will be so special to look back on."







# Miss McKayla Trongo

After being best friends, fellow travel enthusiasts and dating since 2017, McKayla Trongo said 'yes' to her love, Cameron Clark. Her engagement was a surprise as the couple went to the Biltmore House in November 2024 for a day trip with some close friends. At sunset, Cameron got down on one knee and asked McKayla to marry him.

"I had no idea this was happening," McKayla said. "I literally couldn't stop crying. It was such a surreal moment, and I would replay that moment for the rest of my life."

While the couple is thrilled to be working towards planning a wedding together, they have been taking the time to enjoy and celebrate their engagement.

"We have been soaking up this time and enjoying our engagement season with our family and friends," McKayla said.

While no final decisions have been made, the future Mr. and Mrs. Clark have been getting ideas for their big day.

"We have been looking at venues here and there, and found a few we really like," the bride-to-be said. "We have talked about things we want for our wedding and some of the ideas we both have. The most important thing to us is to find a venue that can hold all our friends and family...at the end of the day, having everyone there is what is most important to us."

Being involved in the Lexington community, McKayla is excited about using local Lexington vendors to make their day special.

"Ever since we got engaged, we have had the blessing of local businesses

we have been connected with, friends and family reach out to us and offer their help for the wedding...I'm learning it truly takes a village."

No date has been set yet, but the couple is shooting for late Fall 2025 or Spring 2026 to tie the knot.

With their love for exploration and travel, these love birds have already started talking about honeymoon plans to follow their wedding.

"We love going on road trips and exploring new places together...so of course we are stoked about our honeymoon," McKayla said. "Right now, we are thinking about going to Hawaii and honeymooning there. We really enjoy the 'off-road' take to traveling, and would like to rent a classic van and sightsee that way as newlyweds."

Aside from starting with the early stages of wedding and honeymoon planning, McKayla and Cameron have been working on another project since their engagement.

"We are building our first house and we are so excited about it," McKayla said. "We are so excited about our house and creating a home together, but this is why our wedding planning has taken a backseat for just a little bit. Building a house and all that goes into it is a lot!"

"Cameron has lived here his whole life and I have been in Lexington for most of mine. It's just something about building a home and officially laying roots that makes it even more special to call Lexington home. We are finally living out all the plans we have dreamed for ourselves."





# Wedding Planning checklist

## 12 - 10 Months

- ☐ Secure ceremony & reception venues
- ☐ Book a wedding planner
- ☐ Book photographer
- ☐ Book videographer
- ☐ Book entertainment
- ☐ Meet with caterers

## 9 - 6 Months

- ☐ Take engagement photos
- ☐ Send save the dates
- ☐ Reserve an officiant
- ☐ Reserve hair & makeup
- ☐ Book a florist
- ☐ Purchase a wedding dress
- ☐ Launch a wedding website
- ☐ Register
- ☐ Pick a cake
- ☐ Menu tasting with catering
- ☐ Reserve hotel blocks
- ☐ Arrange for transportation

## 5 - 2 Months

- ☐ Send wedding invitations
- ☐ Book rehearsal dinner venue
- ☐ Have a hair & makeup trial
- ☐ Finalize the ceremony - (music, readings, etc.)
- ☐ Make wedding weekend hotel arrangements
- ☐ Draft a day-of timeline
- ☐ Purchase wedding rings
- ☐ Touch base with all vendors
- ☐ Finalize the menu, flowers, & rental needs and designs
- ☐ Take bridal portraits
- ☐ Meet with the officiant to discuss the ceremony
- ☐ Book the honeymoon
- ☐ Purchase bridal accessories
- ☐ Select bridal party attire

## 1 - 0 Months

- ☐ Report final headcount to vendors
- ☐ Mail rehearsal dinner invites
- ☐ Arrange for a final fitting
- ☐ Send out all final payments
- ☐ Print any day-of paper goods
- ☐ Assemble & distribute welcome bags to guest rooms
- ☐ Rehearse & say "I Do"!





# Midlands officiant just wants to know you *love* each other

Words by Bryn Eddy

**S**amantha Leitner, a wedding officiant serving couples of any background throughout the Midlands, has married over 500 couples since 1989, and of those couples, she only knows of three who have broken up.

"And I could almost put my finger on it right there at the beginning," she said.

Born in Thailand to a Buddhist mother and a Jewish father, Samantha says she's "run the gamut" on religion, now identifying as spiritual while holding strong value in the Bible.

She's an outgoing woman with a frequent smile, the aura of a trusted counselor, is quick to listen and thoughtful in her questioning and has been married to her husband for over two decades.

The value of communication to maintain a happy marriage certainly isn't a new discovery, but Samantha said it's often a lack of communication that

results in unhappy marriages.

No couple has perfect communication, of course, but Samantha says it absolutely needs to be a priority in marriage, especially when brought up in different backgrounds.

"I usually sit down and talk with [couples] about what they are looking for, what is their vision," she told the Chronicle. "I have married a lot of interfaith couples, mostly Christian-Catholic, some Christian-Muslim and some where one is religious and the other isn't."

Samantha helps her couples personalize their ceremony, bringing honor to both their backgrounds.

"One of the couples that I married was a military couple and she was Muslim he was Southern Baptist and I thought, 'Oh jeez, could you possibly be at more opposite ends of the spectrum there,' and then talking with them, I realized there were so many similarities between them," she said.



Samantha said it's easy to stay optimistic about the couples she marries and about marriage in general, having seen so many successful ones.

She herself is on her third marriage and remembers a time when she was adamantly opposed to being a bride ever again.

"I thought, 'I'm a two-time loser. You can forget this. I'm never doing this again,'" Samantha recalled.

Then she met her third. Having been with him for over two decades, Samantha remembers prioritizing communication with him from the start, making him and his family well aware of her prior marriages and her first priority, her daughter.

It is with decades of discernment and multitudes of marriages witnessed

that Samantha continues to help make Midlands couples' ceremonies special.

Her biggest piece of marriage advice, aside from prioritizing communication, is to live life first.

"Travel. Finish school. Do all the things you want to do before marriage," she said, adding that when it's time to make your vows, "I just want to know that you love each other and you're getting married because you love each other."

Samantha can be reached at [scmidlandsweddingofficiant@gmail.com](mailto:scmidlandsweddingofficiant@gmail.com) or at 803-743-8192.



803-665-4733  
[CHENDERSON0828@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CHENDERSON0828@GMAIL.COM)

Follow Us

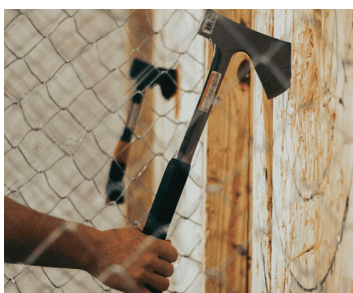




# Local honeymooning is sometimes the way to go.

Here's an itinerary newlyweds can take on in Lexington County

Words by Sophia Sousa



Looking for a place to honeymoon? Why not choose Lexington County. Check out this three-day itinerary that won't break the bank.

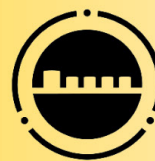
## DAY ONE:

**BREAKFAST AT O'HARA'S BAKERY:** Start your day with a delightful breakfast at O'Hara's Bakery Café, a cozy and charming spot known for its pastries, coffee and breakfast options. O'Hara's Bakery is in downtown Lexington at 121 E Main St. Enjoy a freshly brewed coffee or cappuccino alongside pastries and bagels. O'Hara's is open every day from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m., with prices varying between \$10-20 per person.

**DOWNTOWN LEXINGTON:** Take a stroll through downtown Lexington after breakfast. The area is filled with boutiques and shops, perfect for browsing and finding keepsakes from your honeymoon. Some shops include 210 Shoppe and Studio, The Kindred Boutique, XYZ Boutique, Tenfold Collection and more.

**LUNCH AT LIBBY'S:** After exploring downtown, head to Libby's, located at 116 W Main St. Libby's serves gourmet sandwiches, pizza and more, costing \$10-20 per person. Libby's is open Tuesdays-Saturdays from 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. They are closed on Mondays and Sundays.

**CRAFT AXE THROWING:** Head to Craft Axe Throwing, located at 101 E Main St. Open Wednesday-Thursday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., Friday-Saturday from noon to 11 p.m. and Sunday from 2 p.m. until 7 p.m., the Lexington location has eight targeted lanes and offers cold craft brews and multiple TVs throughout the venue. Workers will give you quick tips to ensure safety, and then you can enjoy a few rounds of axe throwing. To book a session, visit Craft Axe Throwing. Price varies with how many hours you stay.



**LEXINGTON**  
CHAMBER & VISITORS CENTER  
\*\*\*\*\*ROOM RENTALS\*\*\*\*\*

*Perfect for...*

*Bridal Luncheons  
Engagement Parties  
Baby Showers  
and so much more!*

Conveniently located in downtown Lexington, our multi-faceted venue offers meeting and banquet space for small and large gatherings.

With three distinct areas, we offer many seating options, A/V equipment, a prep kitchen and onsite parking.



311 W. Main St. Lexington, SC 29072



(803) 359-6113



[lexingtonsc.org/meeting-space](http://lexingtonsc.org/meeting-space)





**DINNER AT BODHI THAI RESTAURANT:** This cozy restaurant is within walking distance from Craft Axe Throwing. Located at 126 E Main St., Bodhi Thai offers a cozy dinner with authentic Thai dishes. Bodhi is open Tuesday-Saturday from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. for lunch. For dinner, on Tuesday and Wednesday they are open from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m., while Thursday-Saturday is from 5 p.m. until 10 p.m. Book your reservations at Bodhi Thai Dining. Prices vary.

## DAY TWO:

**BREAKFAST AT CAFÉ STRUDEL:** Start your morning at Café Strudel, located at 309 S Lake Dr, for fresh, delicious food and a relaxing atmosphere. Open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday, and 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Sunday, Café Strudel offers

breakfast/brunch, lunch and cocktails. Prices per person vary from \$10-20.

**LEXINGTON COUNTY MUSEUM:** After breakfast, take a peaceful stroll through the Lexington County Museum, located at 231 Fox St. Open from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. on Sunday, the museum offers a tour showcasing Lexington County's history. The seven-acre museum complex features 36 historic buildings. Tickets cost \$5 for adults and \$2 for children, cash and checks only.

**LUNCH AT QUE BUENO MEXICAN BAR & GRILL:** Located at 407 N Lake Dr in Lexington, Que Bueno offers a casual restaurant setting, serving classic Mexican dishes. The restaurant has outdoor seating and offers different types of cocktails. Que Bueno is open from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday and Sunday and 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. Friday-Saturday. The price per person is \$10-20.

**DREHER SHOALS DAM WALKWAY/LAKE MURRAY:** Located at 1836

*Congratulations...*  
ON TYING THE KNOT!

**ELLISON**  
COLLISION & CUSTOMS  
244 E Church St Leesville, SC 29070  
803-317-6069

244 E Church St  
Leesville, SC 29070

803.317.6069  
ellisoncollision.com

And just like that... two hearts, one beat!  
*Congrats to the newly engaged!*

- weddings
- private events
- business events
- karaoke events

**DJ STINGRAY 803**

803.361.3662 | djstingray803.com





North Lake Drive, the Dreher Shoals Dam Walkway runs along S.C. Highway 6. The walkway offers a spectacular view of Lake Murray, perfect for watching the sunset over the water. There is a parking lot nearby, as well as picnic tables and grills if you want to spend the day soaking up the sun.

**DINNER AT CORK & CLEAVER STEAKHOUSE:** Located at 924 E Main St, Cork & Cleaver Steakhouse offers a premier dining experience with steaks, desserts and a wide selection of wine. The restaurant is open from 4 p.m. until 10 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Happy hour is from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m., and prices vary from \$50-100 per person.

This café provides outdoor seating on its patio, or you can sit inside. The café is open from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday. They are closed on Sundays and Mondays. The price per person is between \$10 to \$20.

**RIVERBANKS ZOO AND GARDEN:** Located at 500 Wildlife Pkwy. in Columbia, the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden offers a day full of fun. Situated on 170 acres, Riverbanks Zoo is home to over 3,000 animals and 5,700 plants. The zoo receives over 1,000,000 visitors a year. The zoo is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. every day. Tickets cost \$25 per person if purchased online and \$28 per person at the window.

**DINNER AT BLACK ROOSTER:** Located at 201 Meeting St. in West Columbia, Black Rooster is an Italian restaurant offering Italian dishes, cocktails and more. The restaurant is open from 4:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. Monday-Saturday. The restaurant is closed on Sundays. The price per person is between \$30-50.

### DAY THREE:

**BRUNCH AT HANGAR PROVISIONS:** Located at 109-U Old Chapin Rd. in Lexington, Hangar Provisions offers breakfast, coffee, pastries and more.



[www.AZLawnMowerParts.com](http://www.AZLawnMowerParts.com)



Free 60V Toro® Hedge Trimmer, Blower, or Trimmer with purchase of select Toro® Mower.

**TORO®**

ON NOW  
**SPRING  
SALES  
EVENT**

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

**FREE**  
SELECT 60V\* HANDHELD TOOL  
WITH PURCHASE OF SELECT ZERO TURN OR WALK POWER MOWER



**Authorized Toro® Dealer and Service Center**

**(803) 957-1011**

1779 W Main St., Lexington SC 29072

A-Z is a Veteran owned, local small business.

MON-FRI 8A-5:30P; SAT 8:30A-12:30P



Keep Your Promises.

Independent Insurance Brokers.  
**Brunetto Insurance**  
Agency

**AUTO HOME LIFE BUSINESS**

*Our competitive rates make today the perfect time to assess your insurance needs.*

**803.699.3007**

[www.TheBrunettoAgency.com](http://www.TheBrunettoAgency.com) @thebrunettoagency

10014 Two Notch Rd., Suite D-1 Columbia, SC





Seawell's is a family owned and operated catering business that has been in existence in Columbia since 1946. Once a well-known restaurant, we now provide catering for private events such as weddings, cooperate meetings, cocktail parties and banquets of all sizes. From groups as small as 20 to over groups in the 1,000's, we not only offer our services in our own 30,000 square foot facility but also at off-site locations and venues as well.



**SERVING LEXINGTON, GILBERT, CHAPIN, PROSPERITY**

**1125 Rosewood Dr, • Columbia, SC 29201 • 803-771-7385**

**Open 24/7 Monday - Sunday**





- 75 acres of majestic countryside
- Indoor & outdoor ceremony options
- Climate controlled chapel (accommodates 250)
- 8,000 sq ft reception barn
- Outdoor patio & courtyard for cocktail hour
- In-house wedding directing
- 200+ year old oak trees
- Luxurious bridal suite
- Men's bunkhouse
- Overnight stay options



**SCAN CODE BELOW  
FOR MORE INFORMATION !**



[events@trfvenue.com](mailto:events@trfvenue.com) | (803) 509-1429  
[www.tinrooffarmsvenue.com](http://www.tinrooffarmsvenue.com)  
4300 Fruit Hill Rd. Saluda, SC 29138