

Planners *of the Year*

To find candidates for our second annual Planners of the Year issue, we asked industry professionals for recommendations, poured over past issues and e-newsletters for noteworthy events, and listened to our readers. Nine planners were chosen from across the state, and each brings a unique point of view—not to mention loads of experience—to the table. Read on to see who they are, what they do, and how they keep the industry fresh and exciting. *By Vanessa Goyanes*

Furthering the Industry Through Leadership

Stacy Stern, President
The Special Events Group

WHO SHE IS: Stern opened her own company in 1994. She plans 10 to 15 events a year for clients such as the **Diabetes Research Institute Foundation**, **Miami City Ballet**, **Phillip Morris**, **Pitney Bowes**, and **Whirlpool**. She was interviewed on NBC 6's *South Florida Today* show as an expert in event planning and serves as co-chair of the **Public Relations Society of America's** Professional Day Conference.

STARTING POINT: She graduated from the **University of Miami** with a marketing degree. In 1984, she was hired at **Williams Island**, a private club, developing marketing plans for its membership programs. In just four years, she was offered the special events director position.

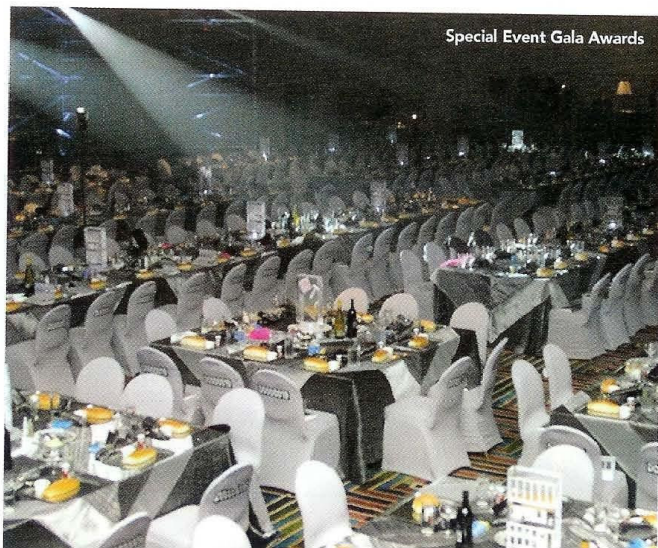
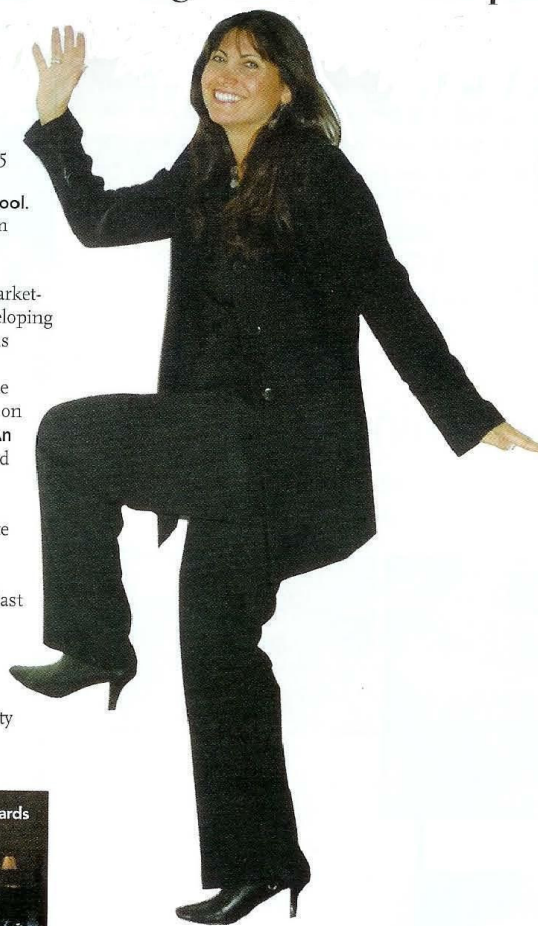
FIRST EVENT: Her first event had a million-dollar budget but needed to be produced in three months, since the previous director had failed to work on it. It was a fund-raiser for the **Community Alliance Against AIDS** called **An Extraordinary Event with Sophia Loren & Friends** for 1,000 guests. It had a two-hour show hosted by Loren, **Melanie Griffith**, and **Tippi Hedren**.

MAJOR EVENT OF 2006: She planned an all-American barbecue for a liquor company's picnic for 3,200 employees at **C.B. Smith Park**, complete with tents, carnival games, rides, a petting zoo, face painters, magicians, clowns, pony rides, a band and DJ, and ice cream trucks.

FAVORITE EVENT: Stern co-chaired the **Special Event Gala Awards** held last year at the **Fontainebleau Hilton**. For the Prohibition-themed event, she turned two areas into a speakeasy and jailhouse.

IN THE WORKS: She is working on a multicultural concert called **Nations In Rhythm** for **Super Bowl XLII**, to be held on January 27 at **John U. Lloyd Park**.

INDUSTRY EVOLUTION: "The advancement of technology has given society the attitude of getting everything instantly," she says.



"It used to be that last-minute events were six months [from the scheduled date]. Then it was three months. Now it can be three days."