

HOUR PROFESSIONALS

Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre

The innate ability to create and design a bride's vision is what sets Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre apart from other full-service entertainment providers in southeast Michigan.

Comprised of Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre, a 14,000-square-foot, two-room facility on 9 Mile Road, and Lakeland Manor, a 9,000-square-foot, one-room facility on Harper between 10 and 11 Mile roads, the successful family owned business has served thousands of clients — from hosting weddings and Fortune 500 corporate events to upscale home celebrations — since 1976.

Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre truly serves as a full-service entertainment provider complete with catering, three banquet rooms in St. Clair Shores, event-planning services, and more.

Robert Nahra, son of the original owners, Jim and Sandra Nahra, began managing the day-to-day operations at Lakeland Manor a few years ago. During that time, he has overseen a strategy to help the business become a one-stop-shop for the food and entertainment needs of businesses, as well as individuals and families.

Nahra has expanded the number of services Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre offers, and has been responsible for facility upgrades and the addition of the Lakeland Banquet & Events Centre on 9 Mile Road. The renovated interior of that building is highlighted by restrooms with crystal chandeliers and a 10-foot-high water tower.

It's this attention to service that has allowed Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre to cater some of the area's most prominent events in the past three decades. Lakeland Manor is the caterer of choice for corporate clients including automotive OEMs and suppliers; General Motors, Mercedes-Benz, and American Axle; and to the Royal Oak Music Theater, Wolverine Harley Davidson, and Carlson Event Planning.

"Robert and his staff have always come through for us when we've done employee events at one or more of our plants for hundreds of people," says John Jerge, vice president of human resources for American Axle Manufacturing in Detroit. "We use Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre all the time for our catering and other entertainment needs, and would recommend [them] to anyone," Jerge adds.

Nahra and his staff also worked on a large product launch for the global candy company Werther's in Chicago earlier this year, showing Lakeland's ability to work for clients outside of Michigan.

"Our business is about high quality and unmatched presentation," says Nahra. "But what sets us apart is that we work closely with our clients to create their intended vision."

When it comes to weddings, Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre professionals are as active in the event-planning process as a client requires, Nahra says. Whether a couple is looking for the best cuisine, or for a complete event-planning package, Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre is at their service. Nahra works with a number of area businesses, such as Birmingham and Eastpointe-based Bellasario's, a floral design store, to create the perfect atmosphere for each couple's special day.



Kelly Engel Coordinator, Michael Viviani Executive Sous Chef, Allen Brioc Food and Beverage Manager, Robert Nahra Owner

"We're truly a full-service entertainment provider — from the food and drinks, to event planning and themed service, to unmatched presentation," Nahra says. "Our goal is to make our clients look phenomenal while serving their entertainment needs."

Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre does just that, and willingly works with clients who have a wide range of budgetary requirements. The company has planned events for clients with budgets ranging from a few dollars per person to more than \$100 per guest. Many wedding packages are available, both on-site and off-site. Options might include an open bar, a meal for \$40 per person, or a surf-and-turf package for \$75 per person — it all depends on how the bride and groom envision their wedding celebration.

A new feature offered by Lakeland Manor is a state-of-the-art, 24-foot mobile kitchen, complete with top-of-the-line cooking and confection equipment and stainless steel walls. That catering vehicle allows professionals to prepare food in advance and then finish the cooking on-site when needed.

There's also a true family atmosphere that clients and guests will feel. Jim and Sandra Nahra remain active in the business. Robert's wife, Nadya, a vice president at Comerica Bank, was instrumental in securing business funding for expansion. Chef Keith Gibbons is a virtual member of the Nahra family, given his active role in working with clients to meet their needs.

Craig Conlon has worked with Nahra for 15 years and is "like a brother" to him, often serving as the key client contact in planning events.

Nahra compares the experience of a client working with Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre to that of an architect working with a construction company to implement a home or building design. The communication is ongoing and continues long after an event is held.

"We get the majority of our business through

referrals, so our reputation is critical to the success of our company," Nahra says.

Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre provides a variety of unique food options and offers VIP tastings to its clients before an event is held. All sauces are homemade, and the company has a "from scratch" philosophy with every food item it creates, Nahra says.

Nahra and his staff have served clients ranging from a manufacturing facility with 1,000 employees, to private jets at a local airport, to weddings and small family gatherings. His mission is to offer his clients the finest food and the best service possible, in order to meet the intended desires, needs, wants, and budget.

Such food and service comes with an unmatched level of presentation and friendliness that will impress any guests, warm their hearts, and please their senses, Nahra says.

Nahra lives by a quote uttered by decathlon coach Brutus Hamilton years ago and it accurately describes the company's customer service philosophy: "It is one of the strange ironies of this strange life (that) those who work the hardest, who subject themselves to the strictest discipline, who give up certain pleasurable things in order to achieve a goal, are the happiest people."

Lakeland Banquet & Event Centre routinely works with area organizations in providing food and service for fundraisers, donating time and products for worthy organizations and individuals in need. He also serves as chairman of the social committee at The Grosse Pointe Yacht Club.

Call 586-772-0450 or 586-773-2211 for more information on services or facilities at either St. Clair Shores location.

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www.lakelandmanor.com