

Mia Bella Grand



Gail Ray, owner of Mia Bella Originals, Interior Design and Event planning, has opened Mia Bella Grand, a new venue “with old soul.” Mia Bella Grand is a private residence consisting of 90 preserved acres, a half-mile-long tree-lined driveway ... three room pool house, two-bedroom caretaker’s house, 3,200 square foot barn, large pond and a sanctuary for many woodland animals. Ray said she leaves half of her estate for private use, but opens the other half for events, parties, photography sessions, etc.

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A NEW VENUE “WITH OLD SOUL”

Ray uses half of her estate for events, parties, etc.

By Gailyn Jackson THE REGISTER-HERALD

WHITE OAK — After purchasing and renovating a 90-acre estate in White Oak, Gail Ray, owner and designer of Mia Bella Originals, Interior Design and Event Planning, has officially opened her home to the public as Mia Bella Grand — a new venue “with old soul.” ¶ Ray said she opened Mia Bella Originals in 2010 after doing interior design as a hobby for many years prior.

“I wasn’t scared in the least when I started Mia Bella Originals because that is just my personality,” Ray said. “I’ve always been an overachiever. I know what I want for myself and I am confident in what I can do.”

Ray’s optimistic attitude towards opening a business plus her extensive experience — as the style editor for *The Wedding Planner Magazine* of Southern West Virginia and assistant manager at event planning organization in Virginia — has helped make Mia Bella Originals, and now Mia Bella

Grand, the success it is.

What began as a business directed towards interior design and custom furniture making soon became one dedicated to a plethora of services such as full event planning, florist designs, day-of services, a-la-carte services and rentals.

“Anything that deals with making something look pretty I can do.”

This idea of making anything “look pretty” was the inspiration behind the name Mia Bella — “my beautiful” in Italian.

Ray shared the meaning behind “originals” saying, “The name explains the work that I do because everybody says that what I do and how I do it is so different from any other event coordinator they’ve seen.”

She said the major difference between her services and other event planners is that she provides a detailed, professional design plan for each wedding that breaks down every design element involved in that particular event.

“The design plan takes a significant amount of time to prepare,” Ray said adding that the average design plan is anywhere from 15 to 25 pages in length.

Another “original” aspect of Ray’s business is that she had decided to open half of her 6,000 square foot estate to the public.

This is Mia Bella Grand, “a private residence consisting of 90 beautifully preserved acres, a half-mile-long tree-lined driveway ... three room pool house, two-bedroom caretaker’s house, 3,200 square foot barn, large pond and a sanctuary for many woodland animals.”

Ray said she leaves half of her estate for private use, but opens the other half for events, parties, photography sessions, etc.

When asked why she decided to open her home to strangers and guests Ray said, “I love seeing people happy ... I love being able to take something that someone really wants and help them see that happen and figure out how to make that happen. It’s my thing.”

As an example, she spoke of how this past November — even though Mia Bella Grand wasn’t officially open to the public — she set up a stylized winter scene in her sun room and allowed photographers to come in and take portraits of families for the holidays.

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Ray's dedication to her clients has shown itself in their reviews.

"Gail was the heroine of my wedding," one bride said.

Another praised the service she received writing, "Perfection! Gail is an absolute must if you are planning a wedding! She makes your dream happen! But honestly, other than her natural talent at decor, SHE is the catch in all of this ... She's easy to work with and makes you feel comfortable. She listens to what you want and will speak up for you no matter what it takes ... We love her and are forever grateful!"

"She made my dream wedding come true — I couldn't of dreamed of anything more!"

Ray projects to have her estate completely open to the public by

June, a full year after she purchased the property.

Stumbling upon the estate by accident, Ray said she immediately knew it would be her home.

"I originally went there because there was an auction for furniture, which I figured I could use as props for my interior decorating ... once I saw the house, I couldn't focus on the furniture."

It was the estate's brick columns, black iron gate, Douglas fir tree-lined driveway, large main house and gorgeous scenery that captivated Ray.

"Look at this place!" she exclaimed to her friend as she stared at the estate that would be hers a little over a year later.

Although countless realtors, contractors and friends advised Ray to tear down the rundown main house and start over, Ray refused.

"I saw its potential. It needed a lot of updating and work, but I couldn't tear it down. It had too much going for it. I have lived in this area for over 20 years and I have never seen a place as beautiful as this."

Purchasing the property in June 2018, Ray immediately began her renovations and opened Mia Bella Grand in August for a few small events and one wedding.

Since the renovations are almost finished, Ray is preparing to celebrate Mia Bella Grand's full opening and is starting the business off right by having booked nine weddings for 2019 already.

With an extensive recommendation list under her belt as well as the aid of her parents, Malcolm and Rita Camp, her daughter, Megan Waddell, her friend who has been helping with weddings for four years,



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Gail Ray is ready to take on 2019 with both Mia Bella Originals and Mia Bella Grand. She has already booked nine weddings for this year.

Lisa Davis, and the rest of her team, Ray is ready to take on 2019 as she runs both Mia Bella Originals and Mia Bella Grand.

Ray does offer tours of her estate, but they are by appointment only.

For more information on the Mia Bella business visit www.miabellaoriginalswv.com or find additional information and pictures on Facebook under Mia Bella Originals, Interior Design and Event Planning and

Mia Bella Grand.

To book an appointment to visit the Mia Bella Grand estate or if interested in any one of Mia Bella's services, call 304-923-4339 or by email at info@miabellaoriginalswv.com.