



Melissa Mizel has been running her downtown invitation design studio, "Dear Emily" for five years. She chose the name Emily to give the name a bit more maturity.
(Jackie Pilossoph for Sun-Times Media)

Dear Emily invites personalization, detail

BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH | Contributor October 2, 2012 8:17AM

WINNETKA — When Emily Limburger and her fiancé, Aron Schechtman, decided to hold their upcoming October wedding on a tour boat that runs along the Chicago River, bride-to-be, Emily decided she wanted her invitations to have a Chicago theme to tie it all in together.

So, she sought the help of Dear Emily, a Winnetka-based stationary business.

"Nobody puts a lot of personal communication in the mail anymore, so it's momentous figuring out what to express and what kind of feeling my customer wants to invoke in the recipient," says owner, Melissa Mizel, who's had her downtown Winnetka design studio for five years.

"Melissa was instantly inspired to give our invites a post card look, using prints that looked like they came from old travel posters," says Limburger, "They looked so good that some of our guests even got them framed!"

Mizel, who has lived in Winnetka for 16 years, and who raised her three children here, has had a few different careers in the past related to special events. Several years ago, she had a business giving telephone advice regarding wedding planning to nervous brides-to-be. The business, also called Dear Emily, led to her becoming an advice columnist for "Beautiful Brides" magazine, where she answered questions about problems and issues that arose during wedding planning.

The name of her column: Dear Emily.

"When I started my first business, I didn't want to call it Dear Melissa, because all of the Melissas I knew were teenagers, and I wanted to add maturity, and Emily sounded more mature," says Mizel.

Michelle Williams was planning her son Jake's bar mitzvah last year, and said she wanted a custom invitation that was new and fresh, something no one had seen before.

"Melissa listened to me, and to what I wanted, and the first book she opened was exactly what I was talking about," says Williams, "She didn't try to tell me what she thought, she did was I wanted."

Williams says Mizel also helped her with the verbiage.

"I was sitting there thinking, 'How do we want it to sound? Do we want it to be fun? Every word was important to us and she made it perfect," Williams said.

"This is where I use my writing background," Mizel said. "For example, what do you do about a parent who has recently died, and it feels like they belong on the invite, Or, are we doing this in third person? Things like that are so important."

Dear Emily provides invitation design for weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs and other social occasions. The business also carries birth announcements, holiday cards, social stationary and business cards.

Mizel said the best part about owning her business is that people who come to her are almost always happy.

"For most of these occasions, there's a very pleasant component of anticipation," she said. "They're looking forward to the wedding, or the holidays, or their new baby, so it's all happy times."

Mizel sees clients by appointment only so she can provide complete, focused attention on the client for as long as they need, and there are so many choices to make when it comes to designing an invitation.

"Decisions need to be made on things like how many to order, the style, the mood, the color, the engraving, the wording; There's so much to think about."

"When I sent out the invites, so many people called me to tell me how great they were," Williams said. "It was so beautiful and in such good taste. She nailed it."

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