

# They do, for others

By **DOMINIC SERRAO**  
CORRESPONDENT

**W**earing a natural white satin gown by Donna Morello and clutching a bouquet of ivory Vendella roses, Flemington resident Angela Rotella walked down the aisle on Feb. 13, gingerly side-stepping red rose petals to wed her high school sweetheart, Joseph Panico, of the Three Bridges section of Readington.

Their wedding, which took place at The Palace at Somerset Park in the Somerset section of Franklin, was witnessed by 175 family members and friends, and was part of a \$100,000 luxury wedding package the couple won from the 2009 Roman Jewelers Wedding Contest. The contest aimed to celebrate a couple who proved they could work together while making a difference in the community.

"We're nervous and want to make sure everything goes right today," Panico said just hours before the ceremony.

Their dream journey in the contest began with the auditions at the Bridgewater Commons Mall in mid-August, which attracted more than 70 couples from the tri-state area. Couples were tasked to make an impact on a charity, in someone's life, or even the environment.

Panico and Rotella responded to this challenge by arranging to have five professional sports teams, the Newark Bears, Lake-wood BlueClaws, New Jersey Devils, Camden River-sharks and the Somerset

Patriots, host more than 70 athletes from the Special Olympics New Jersey, which provides sports training and athletic competition to children and adults who have intellectual disabilities. The athletes and programs of the not-for-profit organization were introduced to the crowds at the games.

Both ardent sports fans, the couple was excited to have worked with the Special Olympics. While they are both New York Giants fans, "She loves the Mets, and I love the Yankees," Panico said.

But the most important thing that they took away from the contest and wedding is "the value of joy in children," he added.

"We were both moved by the smiles on the faces of the athletes when they were in the spotlight in front of thousands of people during the sporting events," Panico said. "It's the emotions that were conveyed that cannot be put into words. It's something we will never forget."

Panico and Rotella met during their freshman year at Hunterdon Central High School, where he played football and baseball. They have been a couple since their sophomore year, a total of nine years. They became engaged last August.

Preparing for the wedding was a wonderful experience, Rotella said.

"It was 90 percent fun

See **Wedding**, Page **B2** and 10 percent stress," she added. "We know that this

is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, so we did what we could to appreciate every minute of planning."

As with any wedding, said Panico, there were a lot of moving parts that all needed to work together.

"Our maitre d' at The Palace has worked with all of the gracious vendors to make sure everything goes seamless and as planned," Panico said.

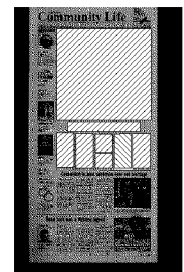
And it did.

In addition to Roman Jewelers and The Palace at Somerset Park, other businesses that contributed in making the young couple's dream come true included Donna Morello Mariage Couture Wedding Gowns, Transposure Fine Art Photography, Conroy's Creations Florist, Icon Hair Studio, Ellie Kowal Cakes Couture, AAA Guaranteed On-time Limousine, LeMedSpa, Occasions, Flemington Department Store, Tacori, Scott Kay, and Mikimoto.

"We have been very blessed and are grateful for what each of the partners has provided," said Panico, a commercial relationship manager with PNC Bank.

According to Rotella, who works for Chubb Insurance, the wedding was much better than any they could have provided for themselves. "There have been some obstacles, but they have made us appreciate the process even more," she added.

Sophie Shor, owner of Roman Jewelers, said the couple "deserves a great wedding." She added just



prior to the ceremony. "All the efforts of Roman Jewelers and our 'romantic partners' are coming together to make their wedding so special."

The couple was wed in a Christian service officiated by the Rev. Rich Van Doren, pastor of the Blawenburg Reformed Church in Montgomery Township.

Following the vows, their first dance was to the tune of "Then" by Brad Paisley. They left on

Tuesday for a cruise to Eastern Caribbean for their honeymoon.

After the newlyweds return to their Three Bridges home, they intend to further their involvement in the community outreach they have started.

"We have already engaged most of the sports venues that hosted athletes from the Special Olympics New Jersey. They are all on board to have a dedicated Special

Olympics New Jersey Night in 2010," Panico said.

The entire experience has changed their outlook on life, he added.

"With a minimal amount of effort, we all have the ability to make a lasting impact on our neighbors," Panico said. "Particularly when we are feeling discouraged, going out of one's way to bring joy to others is an unyielding way to pick oneself up."

**Hunterdon couple's \$100,000 romantic wedding was a life-changing experience**



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY KENNETH VOLPE, TRANSPASURE FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

**Joseph Panico of the Three Bridges section of Readington and Angela Rotella of Flemington, winners of the Roman Jewelers Wedding Contest, valued at \$100,000, were married Feb. 13 at The Palace at Somerset Park in Somerset. Here, they are shown cutting the cake.**