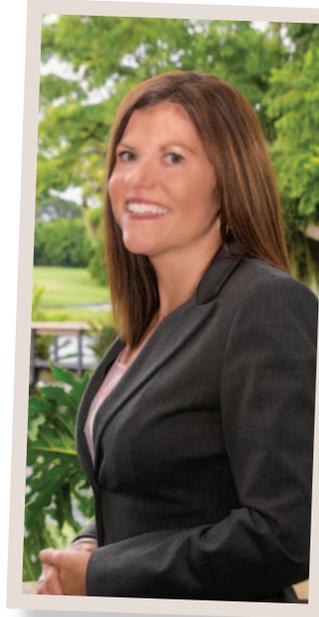


Laura Detwiler

Sales director

Laura Detwiler recently moved to Sarasota from Columbus, Ohio, with her husband, Chris. On the strength of Detwiler's 15-year track record orchestrating creative and memorable weddings, social and corporate events, The Meadows Country Club tapped her to be its new catering sales director. In her new position, Detwiler oversees all catering and banquet operations.



What drew you to our area?

My husband and I were ready for a change. We love the sunshine, being active and outside, and great food and culture. Sarasota was the perfect fit!

What are your initial impressions?

I love it so far. The people here are so nice and it's been wonderful exploring the arts and dining scene. I also love that you can walk everywhere, which I used to do when I lived in Chicago. Did I mention that there's an incredible beach only two miles from where we live?

Top skills a great event planner needs?

You need to be a "people" person. You also need to be organized, detail-oriented and have a calming manner. Clients want to know that if something happens, you have it under control. It also helps to be creative, which is one of my favorite parts of the work. It's very rewarding to work with the client from the initial tour to the day of the event and then seeing it come to life.

Top advice for would-be event planners?

First, keep your schedule flexible. Many events involve long days, nights and weekends. It's a demanding field, but rewarding. Learn all you can — and there's a lot to learn! Books, magazines and social media can teach you a lot, but networking with other event planners is what will help the most.

What's the key sign of job success?

Happy clients! After working with a client for months, it's always a joy when their special event unfolds exactly as they had envisioned. Happy clients equal returning clients and nice referrals.

Biggest challenge?

The unexpected — and you can expect the unexpected at nearly every event. When that happens, you need to be able to come up with a creative solution on the spot and keep a smile on your face. It's tough, but that's what makes the job interesting.

What do you like to do when you're not working?

Chris and I love to cook and to dine out. We've found some fabulous restaurants in the area. You can always find me at the Downtown Farmers Market on Saturday mornings picking up fresh produce and seafood. I also love to be active. Whenever I get the chance, I am out for a run, a long walk or working out. We're also big culture supporters, and enjoy live theater and attending the many area arts and music festivals.