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Goodie bag goodies were all sent to sponsor Paper+Cup in Brooklyn for stuffing. “When Minhee (Cho) opened all the boxes she realized the goodie bags themselves were missing. YIKES!” remembered Erika Firm. “Thankfully Liz from Linda & Harriett saved the day by donating 100 bags at the last minute. We were all furiously stuffing goodie bags at the venue for three hours before the party. Even the bartenders (were) helping out!” *Photographs courtesy of Tory Williams Photography torywilliams.com, unless otherwise noted.*

The Ultimate Paper Party

An informal gathering off the NSS floor becomes a can't-miss event

BY SARAH SCHWARTZ
EDITOR

If the National Stationery Show (NSS) were the Oscars, the annual Stationery Meetup would be its Vanity Fair party. However, the always-packed, invitation-only event — where the crowd is just as splendid as its goodie bags — actually began in 2004 as a birthday party, recalled Erika Firm, president of Delphine, “Since I couldn’t be with my ‘real’ family, I wanted to celebrate with my ‘other’ family: my paper peeps!”

That first year, Firm had held a morning trunk show in her hotel room, and that evening invited a group of designers, buyers and storeowners to the meetup in the lobby. “It was informal and small — maybe 12 people, but we had a blast. I recall quite a bit of champagne! For the next four years we (held)





Left, clockwise from top: Can't-miss décor included "Paper Party" spelled out in oversize metallic foil balloons. Erika Firm designed the mint and gold-foiled paper partyware, and her licensing partner For Your Party donated the printing. "My favorite detail is the stir sticks," she noted. "I think they really make a party festive and make everything look pulled together."

Above: The ladies who made it happen, from left: Janice Carnevale, Bellwether Events; Oh So Beautiful Paper's Nole Garey; Erika Firm and Cyd Converse of The Sweetest Occasion. Corporate sponsors included Crane & Co., Stationery HQ, Tradeshow Bootcamp, Ladies of Letterpress and Mohawk/Felt + Wire.

a meetup in the lobby of whichever hotel I was staying."

But the event quickly built momentum. Soon hotel lobbies couldn't contain the growing crowds, so nightclubs were rented. Cardstore.com became the first official sponsor in 2010 simply by picking up a round of drinks. Other sponsors came on board, and co-hosts helped with guest lists, goodie bags and finding florists and photographers.

Firm was moving cross-country while planning the 2012 gathering, so Nole Garey of Oh So Beautiful Paper played a pivotal role in creating a fabulous event, finding the venue, retaining the photographer and enlisting Cyd Converse of the Sweetest Thing and Janice

Carnevale of Bellwether Events to help plan and coordinate. "As expected, it was our biggest party yet: nearly 300 people!" Garey described. "There was a line out the door, down the street and around the corner to check in."

Speaking of which, Firm took her check-in duties seriously; "It's the only way I get to say hello to everyone!" she laughed. "But my favorite part is the birthday toasts. I just love being around my paper peep family on my birthday. I really can't imagine it any other way."

How the 2013 gathering will play out is a question of time — the industry will just have to wait until NSS to find out! **S**



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