

# Wedding highlights Friday the 13th festivities in Blirstown

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BLAIRSTOWN — Whenever the thirteenth day of any month falls on a Friday, many people have a sense that unfortunate incidents are about to happen. Anyone who has seen the numerous "Friday the 13th" movies can be downright terrified by the date.

Steven Bender and Angela Cosme, on the other hand, who happen to be fans of the "Friday the 13th" films, celebrated in a positive way: By getting married in the town where many of the classic franchise's scenes were shot.

The small ceremony took place this afternoon on Main Street in Blirstown, with about 16 of the couple's family and close friends in attendance. As a nod to the day, "Jason" — the masked villain from the film series — walked the bride down the aisle.

The idea for the unusual wedding originated just over a month ago when Bender and Cosme, who live in Orwigsburg, Pa., visited Blirstown Museum and struck up a conversation with museum curator Jeanette Iurato.

"I could tell immediately that they were 'Friday the 13th' fans because they were taking photos in front of all the buildings," Iurato said. "They had said that they wanted to get married. They

weren't quite sure what to do. They wanted a Friday the 13th wedding, and I said, 'Well why don't you just get married here in Blairstown next month?'"

Once the couple agreed, Iurato became a spontaneous wedding planner, contacting a baker, photographer and wedding officiant in time for Friday the 13th. She also got in touch with "Jason," Blairstown resident Matthew Keller.

"I was asked to be in a wedding, and as a happily married man, I jumped at it," said Keller, who, in addition to his duty walking Cosme down the aisle, decorated his white convertible with cans, wrote "JUST MARRIED" on the back bumper and drove the couple around the block following the ceremony.

Keller said he dressed as Jason "sort of as a prank" during one Friday the 13th, when he went to a pub crawl and generated much conversation with his costume. He eventually created a bloody chainsaw and other props to carry around, and he has become a staple on the streets of Blairstown whenever the date comes around.

Both Keller and Iurato agreed that participating in a Friday the 13th-themed wedding was the strangest event they have ever experienced.

The new Mrs. Bender was introduced to the movie franchise by her now-husband. Asked whether this was how she always envisioned her wedding, she replied with a laugh, "Not really. But he's a fan, so if he's a fan, I'm a fan."

The wedding was part of a day-long celebration throughout the town that occurs whenever a Friday the 13th falls on the calendar. Roy's Hall, located across the street from where the wedding took place, hosted four consecutive screenings of "Friday the 13th" from 4:30 to 11 p.m., which the Benders headed off to following the ceremony.

Co-owner Mark Clifford said Roy's Hall has hosted "quite a few" movie events on past Friday the 13th dates and gets many viewers from tours at Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco in Hardwick, another setting of the original movie which spawned a series of sequels. He said more guests than usual were in attendance on Friday presumably due to it occurring in the Halloween season.

In addition to Roy's Hall, various town businesses held promotions related to the film, including Blairstown Inn on Route 94, where Keller works as a chef. Post Time Pub, on Main Street, offered "Kevin Bacon Burgers" in honor of the actor who appeared in the 1980 movie, and several stores advertised 13 percent off certain items, Iurato said.

Iurato's wedding planning skills may be on display again in the future, as she said couples from Michigan and Massachusetts have already contacted the museum about hosting weddings on the next two Friday the 13th dates in April and July 2018. She is excited about her possible new business venture and also enjoys Blairstown's connection with the movie filmed there.

"It's nice to see the community kind of get in on this," Iurato said. "This is a little boost for local tourism and for the local economy, so it really benefits them to become part of it, and I'm happy to see they're embracing it."