

# An Evening of Everglades Elegance

## Harith Productions Showers VIASYS in Luxury

by Maria A. Erspamer

### What do you do when your client has

the same budget but wants to top the experience of last year's incentive meeting? If you are Harith Productions, you fulfill the client's needs and still manage to shower guests with the luxury, elegance and attention worthy of only the truly rich and famous.

Chairman's Club winners. The collaboration made it possible for Wickrema to deliver a first-class incentive event to VIASYS at a bargain price.

The second evening's event was a soiree of casual elegance at the golf resort. The setting was poolside, and attendees were treated to local favorites, such as conch stew and key lime pie prepared by the resort's renowned culinary staff. Waitstaff doted on attendees, and Absolute

Amusement's Dave Peters topped off the evening with a rally of group games and giveaways.

Night three featured the VIASYS awards gala. At the cool of dusk, winners and their guests arrived on the bridge at the Beach Resort. A safari guide and cherubs costumed as plants greeted them and handed out binoculars. Meanwhile in the Ritz courtyard, a dancer, dressed as a butterfly, was placed in a fountain. Guests were presented with envelopes by the cherubs. As the excitement started to buzz, so did the envelopes. Butterflies were a motif of the "An Evening of Everglade Elegance" themed gala, and butterflies by Amazing Butterflies flitted inside the envelopes.

The safari guide, "Sir Charles Ashton," gathered the group around the fountain and led them in a cheer about VIASYS and its mission of "Excellence for Life." As he concluded, he invited guests to set their butterflies free, and the evening's festivities officially began.

Guests in the courtyard enjoyed cocktails and were met by the swagging tails of a crocodile, panther and leopard, wrangled by Close-Up Creatures Inc. As costumed creatures invited guests inside, a stunned silence fell over the room. That's because design mastermind Sean DeFreitas of Designs by Sean and impresario Wickrema

pulled out all the stops, decorating the ballroom to look like a mystical everglade forest. Lush real and prop vegetation was suspended from the ceiling and masked every wall of the dinner seating and stage. They even lowered the ceiling to create more of a "socketed" everglade feel.

The room looked almost impenetrable, but as guests crossed the threshold into the dinner area, the ceiling ceremoniously raised to invite them into the Evening of Everglades Elegance.

In four courses and four scenes, attendees were delighted with how the evening unfolded. Ritz-Carlton Executive Chef Lawrence McFadden created a spectacular menu that included pickles Apalachicola oysters with panna cotta of golden isle crab, vanilla butter poached spring lobster tail, and nectar of lavender and honey parfait.

The four scenes were a brilliant fusion of dance, song and attendee awards. In the first scene, the New Century Dancers danced the "Awakening of the Chrysalis," a ballet of birth and invitation. In scene two, VIASYS chairman and CEO Randy Thurman hosted a personal and touching Chairman's Club awards ceremony, and in scene three, a T. Skorman entertainer sang "Colors of the Wind."

More awards followed, as the decadent lavender and honey parfait was served. Finally, the "Elegance" epilogue ensued with a "Dawn of a New Era" dance for the inspiration of all in attendance.

"Ritz-Carlton and all of the vendor partners went above and beyond to raise the bar," Wickrema said.

"We didn't know if Harith could top last year," said a returning VIASYS Chairman's Club winner at the close of the evening, "but he certainly did it again."

Harith Productions  
Oreland, PA  
(215) 517-5500  
www.harithproductions.com



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