

Their perfect beach day

GROOMS CELEBRATE EACH OTHER, A NEW LAW AND LI'S COAST

BY ESTELLE LANDER
Special to Newsday

As soon as New York legalized same-sex marriage in July 2011, David Kilmnick's mother called him to say, "Now I'm going to be able to dance at your wedding."

And on Sept. 2, Rosanne Kilmnick did, indeed, dance with her son at the celebration of his marriage to Robert Vitelli, who took to the floor with his mom, Dawn Duvall, in front of about 200 friends and relatives.

It was a wedding uniting two prominent Long Island activists: Kilmnick is chief executive of the Long Island Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Services Network, which he founded 19 years ago and which runs centers in Garden City and Bay Shore. Vitelli is the group's chief operating officer.

People kept asking the couple, who met 11 years ago at work, if they'd marry immediately after the law passed. "With everyone expecting us to get married, we really wanted the decision to be ours," Kilmnick recalls. But before setting a date, the two focused on educating the gay community about the new law — what papers to fill out, how to navigate town halls and the like.

Kilmnick, 45, and Vitelli, 37, who live in Centereach, each had a deep-seated love of local beaches, which they'd grown up visiting. "It was our dream to get married on the beach overlooking a body of water on Long Island," Kilmnick says. They chose Land's End in



The grooms pose a few hours before the wedding with their Yorkshire terriers at their Centereach home. Robert Vitelli, left, holds Petey, and David Kilmnick holds Sparky.

Vitelli and Kilmnick say their vows in front of about 200 guests overlooking Great South Bay at Land's End in Sayville on Sept. 2. They married a little over a year after New York enacted legislation allowing same-sex marriage.

Sayville, and set up a chuppah on the beach with the Great South Bay lapping nearby.

They incorporated other Jewish wedding rituals (Kilmnick is Jewish, Vitelli was raised Catholic), including the ketubah, or contract, which they commissioned from an artist who painted it on canvas. Kilmnick did the traditional stepping on the glass. Robert O. Hawkins Jr., a social work professor of Kilmnick's, officiated at the ceremony. The couple exchanged rings made of white gold and titanium.

Every detail of the wedding, from the starfish and seashells on the personalized wedding-card box to the seagulls printed on the invitation, was chosen for its sandy theme.

Guests even found their tables by name of beach: Jones

See ALBUM on H18

THE COUPLE
Robert Vitelli & David Kilmnick

THE DATE
Sept. 2, 2012

THE VENUE
Land's End, Sayville



Vitelli dances with his mother, Dawn Duvall, left, to "The Man You've Become," and David Kilmnick dances with his mom, Rosanne Kilmnick, to "There You'll Be."



Kilmnick pours sand during a ceremony in which each color represented a different facet of their lives, such as family, love and work.



Continuing the wedding's coastal theme, seating cards directed guests to tables, each named for a Long Island beach.

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David Kilmnick and Robert Vitelli enter their reception — and the rest of their lives — as a married couple. "It was everything we dreamed of," Kilmnick said.

A perfect beach day for grooms to celebrate

ALBUM from H16

Beach, Robert Moses, Tobay, Smith Point, Long Beach and Atlantic Beach.

The colors of the wedding, echoed in the white hydrangeas and navy blue dresses the three bridesmaids chose, were meant to evoke sea grass, dunes and ocean.

Kilmnick and Vitelli wore matching gray vests and white shirts with light gray tuxedos by Jean Yves from Tuxedo Park in Carle Place. Their three groomsmen also wore gray tuxes but with navy vests and shirts. The wedding party walked down the aisle to Pachelbel's "Canon in D," and Rosanne Kilmnick and Dawn Duvall walked their sons down the aisle to John Denver's "Annie's Song."

The couple plans to go on a honeymoon cruise to the Caribbean in November.

Instead of a typical candle-lighting ritual, the couple held a sand ceremony, where each man poured colored sand into a container to symbolize

family, love, passion for their work and other aspects of their lives.

"Fighting for the right to get married in New York State felt important," Vitelli said. "We wanted something symbolic not only for us coming together but for our work."

Later, they opened some touching gifts. The first was an American flag and certificate from Rep. Steve Israel (D-Dix Hills) stating that the flag was flown in honor of the couple's wedding over the Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 28.

The second was an 1887 edition of the "White House Cookbook" given them by a young gay man from Northport, whom Kilmnick and Vitelli had helped, who works at the White House. The book is inscribed by Vice President Joseph Biden and says, "I am so proud to stand with both of you. It is long past due."

Despite being so active in the gay community, the couple had only attended one other same-sex marriage before theirs, Kilmnick said, adding, "It was everything we dreamed of."