



STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Friends and family dance Sunday in the procession of groom Viren Shah, on horse in background, at the Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort.

WEDDING WINDFALL

As the Indian population in the Chicago area grows, an industry flourishes

BY VIKKI ORTIZ HEALY
Chicago Tribune

On his sprawling horse farm in rural Wayne, Billy Massuci has become an unexpected intermediary in the local Indian wedding scene.

His five-car garage houses a 15-foot tall silver chariot used to transport the groom and his

family during the *baraat*, a customary procession to the ceremony. Boxes of fireworks, buckets of silk roses and rows of red carpets offer clients enhancements for a dramatic entrance.

And stacks of jewel-covered horse costumes stand ready to transform Massuci's old white geldings and mare — named Rum, Dusty, Vanilla and Buzz —

into breathtaking symbols of Indian culture.

"I'm impressed every time," says Massuci, who was born in Chicago and is of Italian descent. He and his horses have been hired more than 1,000 times in the 10 years since he converted his ranch, Billy's Horse Farm, to a one-stop shop for Indian grooms, called Maharaja Farm.

As the Indian population in the Chicago area has grown dramatically in recent decades — adding 20,000 people in DuPage and Cook counties from 2007 to 2013 alone, according to U.S. Census bureau statistics — so has the local industry geared to throw Indian weddings — customarily

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