



KEEPING DEWEY BEACH ROCKING

Vikki Walls converts a passion into an annual music conference which this year - from Sept. 25 through 27 - will showcase 175 bands and deliver global talent.

BY HAL ALPIAR

Your name is Vikki Walls. You're a spirited, music-loving woman who grew up 12 miles west of Dover on the Delaware side of Maryland. You are, at age 31, locked into a pleasant but dull career as a legal secretary, working for a respected, well-known Delaware judge, but headed nowhere exciting in life.

You go to a concert with a girlfriend and notice that the band doesn't have t-shirts for sale. The missed opportunity bothers you so much that you start a t-shirt company to meet the need, and begin producing t-shirts to promote that band, and others.

Along the promotional path, you audition for a local two-minute "Concert Update" show on MTV. A t-shirt customer of yours sees the show and hires you as booking agent with his Dover-based club. Six nights a week of band bookings lead you into 15 years of managing a band in Harrisburg, Pa.

In Harrisburg, you create a series of music conferences, and meet the publisher of Musician Magazine when you attend the Texas SXSW Music Conference to learn more about the business. You end up selling the magazine - along with the newly-created Musician's Atlas - at trade shows.

At one trade show, you end up across the aisle from a new, upstart company no one's ever heard of called eBay. Two weeks later, your shared aisle connection lands you a

2008 DEWEY BEACH MUSIC CONFERENCE

Straddling a narrow strip of barrier island between the Atlantic Ocean and Rehoboth Bay (part of parent Delmarva Peninsula) is the home of the annual Dewey Beach Music Conference.

Each fall, local and visiting music-lovers flock to the casual, laid-back beachfront environment, where all performance venues are connected within just a few blocks walking distance. No cabs. No hassles.

Three nights of band performance showcases, two days of demo and mentoring sessions, plus industry and trade show meet-and-greet events provide plenty of opportunities to grow and nurture a music career . . . or just experience some great performances.

Events afford participants opportunities to hear industry professionals discuss the issues of the day in an informal setting. Mentoring sessions and demo listening sessions provide valuable one-on-one music and career path advice.



KEITH MOSHER PHOTOGRAPH

PARTICIPATING VENUES

(With Special Thanks to the Town of Dewey Beach)
Full Details Available at www.DeweyBeachFest.com

- Booksandcoffee
- Bottle & Cork
- Gary's Dewey Beach Club
- The Lighthouse
- McShea's
- Rusty Rudder
- Starboard
- Venus on the Half Shell

job as the eBay Music Category Expert Consultant. Five years later, after a major eBay "growing pains" layoff, you call a club owner who once hosted bands you managed, to invite him to the weekend music conference you're running in Harrisburg. Instead, you end up accepting his invitation - Alex Pires, of Highway One LLC, owner of the Rusty Rudder and Bottle & Cork, asks you to set up music conferences at the Rusty Rudder and book nationally-known recording artists at the Bottle & Cork.

Both challenges are right up your alley. You bring the big names to the Bottle & Cork, and on top of that, you're now running your 7th annual Rusty Rudder-based music conference, which has grown into an eight venue, five-block, twelve-stage extravaganza featuring bands from every corner of the United States, as well as from Canada, England, Ireland, and Australia.

You do all of this by yourself with just a little help from your friends, who travel from Harrisburg to jump in as volunteers, handling registration, trade show organization, and making sure the professional "panels" run smoothly. They volunteer, you tell us, "to help make Delmarva a great home for great music."

Your fan following has grown from hundreds to thousands and ushered your career full circle back to Delmarva. You love music! You appreciate what many others overlook, that bands are often taken advantage of by industry business people. You do everything possible to accommodate the bands you book. You want them to know their artistic talents are welcome, and that we want them to return. Certainly, you hope they'll talk up Delmarva. "That goodwill goes a long way toward extending the shoulder seasons for area businesses," you say. **DQ**



HAL ALPIAR PHOTOGRAPH

Vikki Walls loves the interaction with musicians she gets as Dewey Beach Music Conference coordinator.