

PR firm

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in Cape May, the Jazz Festival, the 400th Anniversary Celebration in 2009, Harborfest 2009, and various spring festivals.

Tourism commission member Bob Steenrod said he was pleased with the effort and said the key point in a successful PR campaign is to

have a strategy. Steenrod said he was glad the Sherry Group was including attractions outside of Cape May city limits and promoting the region. He said there are enough attractions in the vicinity to encourage day-trippers. Steenrod said he recently became aware of the concept of "race widows" who might be accompanying spouses to the

New Jersey Motorsport Park in Millville, and this is a group who might be looking for a side trip to Cape May.

The Tourism Commission also discussed promoting Cape May as a "value" destination, particularly in the shoulder seasons when room rates may be lower. Hoiston encouraged the commission to make the Sherry Group

aware of special packages so they could amplify that point with media contacts.

Charlotte Todd, chairman of the Energy Committee, encouraged the Tourism Commission and the Sherry Group to promote Cape May as a "green" town. She said visitors from Bayonne were recently pleased to hear Cape May is planning to use solar

and wind power for the new Convention Hall project. Todd said she is trying to enlist the aid of all groups in Cape May to "power down" and help utilize power sources off the grid.

"You might look at giving awards for going green," Todd said.

Todd highlighted some of the efforts being made to pro-

mote the use of recycled products, compact fluorescent light bulbs, low flow shower heads, solar power to heat pools, etc.

"I hope we, in our tourist connections, can promote some of these things," she said.

Convention Hall

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seated July 1, rescinded the ordinance and elected to place it on the ballot in the Nov. 4 general election, saving the city the cost of a special election. In the meantime, the city had five town hall style meetings where it

presented information on the design and fielded questions and comments from the public, including a questionnaire prepared and distributed at the first meeting. Questions included the location, size, design, and uses of the building.

Architect Martin Kimmel

was present at four of the five town hall meetings to present information and answer questions.

Mahaney said on Tuesday he believes the open and transparent process allowed the voters to give input and develop a vested interest in the project.

Asked about his satisfaction with the result of the vote, Mahaney said, "A 2-1 margin on the ballot issue, which is the most costly capital project in Cape May's history, is a mandate."

Mahaney said he would not betray the confidence shown by Cape May voters. He said

he was confident the measure would pass after the decision was made to put the question before the voters and the five public meetings. Mahaney said he and Councilwoman Terri Swain spoke to every business, social and civic group in Cape May and that gave these groups an oppor-

tunity to express concerns.

Mahaney said he believed the public education process allowed the voters to make their decision to approve the project.

Whale's Tale

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ater, every group offers a distinct service that in its entirety, makes us who we really are."

Other non-profit groups to benefit include Nature Center of Cape May and Animal Outreach on Nov. 14; Cape May Stage, East Lynne Theatre, and Beach Theatre Foundation on Nov. 21; and Center for Community Arts Franklin Street School Project on Nov. 28.

It was the early 1970s when Chuck and Hilary Pritchard met at Denison College in Ohio, fell in love, and married.

Hilary, an art major, felt she was "too cool" to go on for her master's degree. As it was the Vietnam era, Chuck was applying for "conscientious objector" status.

Chuck's mother had a house here so the Pritchards moved to Cape May for a summer, or

so they thought, to work.

"Chuck worked on the docks, mowed lawns, and at Texas Avenue Food Market," Hilary said. "I was the first woman in Cape May to pump gas. I worked at Parker's Gulf Station at the base of the bridge. I also worked on the ferry making breakfast and learning how to pour coffee on a moving vessel."

It was Chuck's job at Texas Avenue that led to the birth of the Whale's Tale.

"Bill Johnson owned it at the time and he knew I was an art major," said Hilary. "He suggested we open a store and backed us financially."

The first Whale's Tale opened in the rear of the adjacent mini-mall on the Washington Street Mall in November of 1973.

"People are always amazed that we actually started the store in November and actually made it through the first

winter," said Hilary.

To make it work, both Pritchards held second jobs the first year and poured all profits back into the store.

Hilary said it was a great time to begin a venture in Cape May.

"It was right in the middle of the Carolyn Pitts era (who documented the city for its National Historic Landmark status) and bed and breakfasts were opening. Cape May was getting better and better. Artists were moving here. We were all about the same age. We had such fun," she remembered.

"I wanted to sell handmade crafts but I knew nothing about retail whatsoever," she said. "Chuck's father had a store so Chuck had some idea of what we were getting into."

Hilary laughed when she recalled traveling to Gatlinburg, Tenn. for their first trade show.

"Bill Johnson, Chuck,

another partner Scott Kenan and I went with badges saying 'Texas Avenue Food Market.' We were an odd bunch."

But this "odd bunch" had the perfect marriage of energy, talent and vision and an "incredible team effort."

"We'd stay up all night working with displays; we recycled windows and actual docks, installing them ourselves," Hilary said. "The windows were great until they leaked."

The store grew year by year, moving after its first to the front room of the current building then incorporating the adjoining room its second year and taking over the entire building its third.

"The back used to be Seidelman's Appliance Store," said Hilary. "For years people used to come in trying to make payments."

As time went by the Pritchards had two sons,

Travis now 28, and Collin, 24. Hilary got involved with the community joining the Cape May County Art League, working with the Nature Center of Cape May, West Cape May Elementary School's PTA and school board. She also served on West Cape May's Shade Tree Commission and was instrumental in founding the Lima Bean Festival. Today, two of her passions are the Center for Community Arts and the Cape May Film Society and its youth filmmakers program.

"We are so lucky to have raised our kids here. It's a safe place, there's something for everyone. All these groups and organizations do wonderful things for the community," Hilary said.

She credits the community and its varied groups with shaping her life as well as those of her children.

Travis joined the Film Society's first youth program. Today, he is pursuing a career in sound and film and still helps with the society. Collin is in Montana studying with PAST Skills, a wilderness school which is the educational source for those seeking to immerse themselves in the ancient arts of indigenous philosophy, nature awareness, primitive survival, and aboriginal tracking.

"It's funny, when the kids come back after their first year away from home, Cape May looks entirely different to them. They realize how lucky they were growing up here and appreciate the town in a whole new way."

Hilary thinks growing up in Cape May instills priceless lifetime values.

But it's also the Pritchards themselves who inspire.

In 1975, Sue Hobbs joined the staff. She's the expert on the shells - one of the most popular sections in the shop.

Karan Packer started working at the Whale's Tale in 1980 and is now general manager. Both agree the Pritchards bring out the best in their employees.

Packer said, "Hilary and Chuck bring out the best in everyone. They're smart enough to recognize talents and make people want to stay. We have two and three generations working here. We all like each other, there are no 'top dogs,' no egos. The biggest thing is we all respect each other. No one dreads going to work."

Hilary said the store and the employees evolved together and grew into a place that just "clicks."

She is most proud to have received the "Voted Best of Cape May 2008" by the readers of CapeMay.com" award three years running for customer service as well as gift shop.

Packer, as manager, is not often on the "floor" but working upstairs behind a computer.

"The best thing is to walk downstairs and have a customer compliment you. It certainly helps when customers reinforce the positive," said Packer.

"You should see how this place comes together on a busy August day," she continued. "And when people tell you how much they love your shop and the town itself and they come back year after year, that's just a great feeling."

Besides the non-profit groups, the Whale's Tale is giving back to customers too. Shoppers who spend \$100 get a \$10 gift card.

The store is open daily at 10 a.m. including Friday and Saturday evenings.

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