

Rocking with Charlene Burg, owner of Popular Party DJs

By Mary Ann Kiczek

Back in the early 1980s, when Charlene Burg '87 was playing the latest disco melodies on the County College of Morris radio station, she never imagined that 25 years later she would still be spinning tunes. Only now Burg plays music and offers her own brand of high-energy entertainment as owner of Popular Party DJs, a business she started in 1983. Burg's team of mobile entertainers includes five Masters of Ceremony and six spinner DJs.

Popular Party DJs entertains at all types of events – from weddings to sweet sixteens, corporate events, bar/bat mitzvahs, class reunions and more. When asked her favorite type of event, she answered without hesitation, “Weddings...definitely weddings.”

A day in the life of a DJ business owner

“The phone generally starts ringing at 10:00 a.m. with clients calling to book a DJ for an upcoming event or to confirm a planned event. When we're not on the phone, we're updating our digital music library,” said Burg in describing a typical business day.



Charlene Burg of Popular Party DJs provides entertainment for many types of events including weddings, sweet sixteens, bar/bat mitzvahs, and school events.

About three hours prior to an event, her team uses a checklist to pack all equipment. Then it's off to the event location to unload, perform sound quality checks, and change into tuxedos. As guests arrive, she and her fellow DJs switch into high gear. “We do whatever it takes to get people energized and out on the dance floor,” Burg explained. Most events last four to five hours, after which the DJ team reloads the equipment and heads home.

“It's a long night, but the thank you's and smiles at the end of the evening make it all worth it. Knowing that you contributed to making someone's event a success is very rewarding,” she commented.

What success looks like

To be a successful DJ, you need to know all genres of music and stay current on the latest music trends. Burg meets monthly with peers to discuss current trends and new directions for enhancing the party experience, and she is taking courses in CCM's Technology division of CCM to boost her skills.

Maintaining and upgrading her digital music library of more than 50,000 titles is one of the key challenges Burg faces in her profession. Despite the challenge, Burg does not download illegal music. Her music library comes from store purchased CDs, CD clubs such as Columbia House, and from distributors who market to professional DJs. She rips her music to mp3 formats, giving her the flexibility to bring CDs to events, along with her computerized system and high-end equipment.

On the road, she has back-up equipment integrated into her system, to avoid any possibility of down time at an event should she experience computer malfunctions. Another challenge is the need to constantly upgrade sound equipment. “I just wish the gear would get smaller and lighter,” she added with a grin.



CCM Winner's Circle

How to hire a DJ

There are many different types of events, many of which have their own ethnic or cultural traditions. A professional DJ knows through experience which songs to play when, and how to professionally interact with a crowd to ensure that guests are having a great time. This only comes from training, years of experience, and an extensive knowledge of music and equipment. Burg cautions anyone in the market for a DJ not to select solely by price. “Be selective. Entertainment can ‘make or break’ your event. You need to listen to what the DJ has to say and make your decision based on the DJ's experience,” she explained.

Burg started right at CCM

Burg credits CCM with making her more outgoing, obviously a necessity in her business. The business classes she took have been invaluable in providing her with practical skills in accounting, marketing, and communication. She has many good memories of her years at CCM, including “Professor Mammon's vocal classes, the craziness of working at WCCM, and a certain Jell-O wrestling match.”

Today, Burg is the mother of two teenage girls. Elisa, 16, is starring in CCM's Annie Get Your Gun production, and 13-year-old Leanne attends middle school and is an aspiring artist. Not surprisingly, in her spare time, Burg enjoys singing, dancing, and listening to music, as well as baking and doing crafts with Leanne.

Burg returns to her CCM roots often, serving as a DJ for various Campus Life events. In fact, for more than 20 years, her company has provided the mobile entertainment for the Campus Life Awards Dinner.

To learn more about Burg and Popular Party DJs, visit www.popularpartydjs.com or call 973-361-6262.