

Article from 11/11/2009 Aroundmainline.com

Christine Mullen always loved the Blue Max Inn and was involved in the banquet and bridal industry for years in Maryland's Cecil County. When she found out the owners of the Inn were putting the gorgeous historic house on the market, in 2004, she quickly took the chance for her dream job. Today, Mullen is the proud owner and innkeeper of one of Chesapeake City, Maryland's four beautiful Bed and Breakfasts. "People come from Philadelphia all the time and always say to me, 'This is the best kept secret, we had no idea this great town was here.' I think Chesapeake City evokes the charm of a European village because we have the (C&D) canal so we see the large ships going through; we have a beautiful historic district, fantastic shops and great dining. It really is such a wonderful place for me to call home and welcome my guests," said Mullen.

The Blue Max Inn started as a B&B in 1990. The house was built in 1854 and was once owned by renowned writer Jack Hunter who penned the runaway best-selling novel, "The Blue Max." Hunter was a well-respected and well liked man in the Chesapeake City community. The book was made into a movie in 1966 with George Peppard (best known for his role in the '80s hit television show *The A Team*) as the lead role, and costars Ursula Andress and James Mason. Mullen has a vintage movie catalog, with Peppard on the cover, on a breakfast nook to display to guests.

Known affectionately across town as "the house with generous porches," the Blue Max also boasts Chesapeake City's 'most photographed man', Max. Max is large, impending, albeit friendly looking ceramic pirate statue that stands guard from the top balcony. "When I bought the Inn, I found Max (my mascot) in a shop in Florida and shipped him up here. I knew he was the perfect touch! And he is quite the conversation piece. You certainly can't miss him when you arrive in town and drive by," explained Mullen.

Mullen boasts a strong marketing background. Via her website, BlueMaxInn.com, she offers online gift certificates which are popular in the fall with the seasonal activities the town plans. Christine also works hard to come up with creative ideas and fun adventures to keep her guests coming back and the pipeline of new customers growing. In the winter, her now popular Blue Max Inn Murder Mystery Weekends are a big hit. Think of a modern-day version of 'Clue' with up to twenty strangers converging on the Inn for a weekend with unknown outcomes. "It's a total hoot. People really get into the murder mystery weekends. A week before they come to Blue Max, everyone receives their instructions and character in the mail. I have guests arrive in full character and garb on Friday evening! Others, of course, it takes a bit of time for them to warm up. By Saturday evening, after we have a fun cocktail hour, someone has been murdered and then we go to dinner as a group and have some conversation, try to figure out the winner," explained Mullen. At dinner at The Bayard House just down the road, the murderer is revealed, and prizes are awarded to those who 'cracked the case' successfully.

Mullen has a loyal following of return guests who make the short drive from the Main Line and Philadelphia suburbs. Another portion of her clientèle come up from Baltimore, and to stay for the night in Chesapeake City after a tour of the nearby Brandywine Valley. The Inn is spacious-with seven luxurious rooms and two suites-all with private baths. There are four relaxing porches, charming décor, fireplaces and whirlpool tubs. With the rich culture and community of Chesapeake City offering monthly activities, Mullen said guests are steady at The Blue Max year-round. She admits running your own B&B is a tremendous amount of work but says the experience of owning a business she admired from afar for years is very rewarding. "This is a tough job doing it all yourself, but I absolutely love it. The best part of having your own bed and breakfast is that you meet the nicest people. Because your average person (who is not social) will go to a hotel. But it's a certain clientèle who chooses the experience of a B&B. And I love the chance to meet my guests and welcome them into the beautiful Blue Max Inn experience."