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## ON THE JOB with Christine Mullen of the Blue Max Inn

The Blue Max Inn is a quintessential example of the old business adage "location, location, location." Nestled in scenic Chesapeake City, this historic inn, built in 1854, boasts nine guest rooms, including a handicap accessible room.

It is lovingly maintained and cared for by owner and innkeeper Christine Mullen, who cites an "incredibly supportive business community" as a key to her success.

### **How did you get your start?**

I worked at Schaefer's (Canal House restaurant) as banquet manager for 10 years, so I was really familiar with the town. I knew a lot of people in town and I knew I loved this town. I heard through the grapevine that this was up for sale and as soon as I walked in I just said, "That's it. That's what I want to do."

### **How did you train for the job?**

I did a lot of different things. The gentleman who owned the inn before me told me virtually everything he could. My job as banquet manager really prepared me for this. I went on the Internet a lot and looked up other B&B's. I always admired the people that ran them. And I went to an innkeeper convention.

### **What essential skills are required?**

You need to love people. I think that's probably the most important thing. I think you need to be a good businessperson. You need to be a good marketing person. You need to be able to do a lot of different things because it's just basically you running things. You need to not get flustered and know who to call if something goes wrong. And be prepared for something to always go wrong and just keep on truckin'.

### **What is the strangest request/question you've ever had?**

I had a guy who called me once who ended up in Chesapeake, Va., and said, "I think I'm in the wrong spot. How close are you?" And I just laughed and said, "You're not gonna make it."

### **Describe a typical day.**

We do breakfast in the morning. We clean rooms. We answer the phones and e-mail. There's always banking and bookkeeping that has to be done. We're always shampooing rugs and stuff. There's always something to be done.

### **What's the best part of the job?**

Hands down, you meet the nicest people at a bed and breakfast.

### **What's the biggest challenge?**

It's a big property to take care of. Just the maintenance is a huge challenge.

### **Who succeeds in this business?**

People that like the service industry. Someone with that background. You either love it or you hate it. I get phone calls at 2 in the morning. People don't realize it's a B & B. They'll more or less think hotel. You need to be very service oriented and not let that bother you or put you in a bad mood.

### **What advice would you offer someone looking to go into this field?**

I think it's a wonderful industry and I think more people think B&B's now, where they didn't 20 years ago. I think it's a great business if you want to be in the service industry and you want to own your own business. It's not as stressful as owning a big restaurant.