

## PROMOTER PROFILE

# Michele Green

## Wilmington Winter Bluegrass Festival

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I've been picking banjo and going to bluegrass festivals for quite a while now and taking my son along since he was born. When he was real little, we used to sleep in my van under the instruments! He now plays the upright bass in the same band as me.

I have always found that the bluegrass communities are a unique blend of people from all walks of life. I think of the festivals as a family reunion - only with relatives I want to see! I am constantly impressed with the incredible talent on and off the stage. I find that there is an immense amount of personal pride and generosity in the sharing of the American bluegrass tradition from everyone I have met. I wanted to do my part in generating this music as well. I realized there was a need to create a festival that would promote and connect emerging bluegrass musicians from the different regions. There are so many wonderful new bands out there that need a venue for the experience and exposure needed to launch and market their music.

The whole festival idea really started to snowball from there. The Wilmington Winter Bluegrass Festival is held March 18 through 20th, 2011 indoors at the Holiday Inn Select in Claymont, Delaware. It usually falls on the third weekend of March. This is our fifth year now since we were incorporated and became a nonprofit 501C3 volunteer organization. It is our mission to preserve and generate the American bluegrass music tradition through entertainment, participation and education. A very affordable admission to the event provides an opportunity not only for entertainment, but also to play and to learn. It originated with dedicated founding board members - Hugh Dolan, Kevin Justice, Paul Rogers, and Ron Penska. Our newest board member is



John Pappas. The festival is funded in part by the Delaware Division of the Arts, The Delaware Tourism Office and The Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. With their initial support and confidence in our undertaking we were able to see an increase in patronage every year. It's an incredible feeling to have the state recognize the importance of preserving the art of the bluegrass music tradition.

I am always surprised at the willingness of people to help. We have a very large volunteer base and everyone is so receptive in what we are about, especially other festival promoters including the Arcadia, AFBA, Wind Gap, NEPA, Eastern Shore, and Peninsula Bluegrass festivals.

We have 30 bands on two stages, tons of jamming at all levels and 27 workshops throughout the weekend. Basically it's a bluegrass music bonanza everywhere on every floor of the hotel including the elevator! This year our headliner will be Beachley and Scott. Also on the main stage, Flatland Drive, Keystone Mountain Boys, The Zekiah Swamp Cats, Rattlesnake Hill, Fairview Avenue, Foggy Mountain Hilton, Terminal 5, Stoney Run String Band, Across The Track Bluegrass, Jericho Bridge, and Old Line Drive. There is an additional 17 bands on the showcase stage. Anyone who runs a festival of any size knows how overwhelming and exhausting it can be on a daily basis. You have to be mindful not to lose sight of why you originally began. This has all been one big huge highlight for me. I am so proud and privileged to be part of what we have accomplished as an organization. For me, I'm living bluegrass!

[www.wilmingtonwintergrass.org](http://www.wilmingtonwintergrass.org)

**BMP**