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'The enthusiasm is infectious'

By Staff

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Chris Uebbing, 50, never imagined that she would end up as "venue uber czar" for the non-hierarchical yet democratic arts event known as the Infringement Festival.

Though Uebbing (pronounced you-bing), with her brightly dyed red hair, dancer's body and artistic sensibility, does look the part, she is not an artist like many of the other festival organizers.

Her first involvement was as an attendee.

"In 2005, I saw some top-notch, very moving performances -- and there were only four people watching," Uebbing said.

She saw a dancer with one leg, and took part in a performance art piece where she and the rest of the audience experienced being victimized.

"I was amazed that these beautiful, tragic, intelligent performances were not better attended," she said.

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Two years later she started volunteering. She explains the qualifications for an Infringement Festival volunteer thusly: "You have to show up. And not be a thief."

And what are her actual duties? "I sort of act as liaison between the person who is overseeing each individual venue and the festival."

There are more than 50 sites -- all donated -- where many types of arts-related events will occur.

Some venues are large and well organized, like Hallwalls. Others are literally undeveloped spaces, or somebody's backyard. One venue owner, she said, is getting rid of the contents of the building; the first show is a combination rock show and furniture sale.

"It's a lot of troubleshooting and cell phone tracking," she said.

Why does she do it? "The enthusiasm is infectious," she said. "I'll do whatever it takes -- people come at this from all levels of expertise. I'm a nurse practitioner from Williamsville; I'm somebody's mom. Hopefully most of the stuff that is scheduled for the festival will transpire."

-- Jana Eisenberg