

How to Start and Operate Our School & College



or, *"How to hang around musicians
without going broke ..."*

Greetings, friends:

When we first started the WoodSongs broadcast, I never imagined that we would be on the air all over the world. But we kept at it, stayed patient ... and it worked.

Now we are helping students across the USA and Canada bring the spirit of the broadcast into their schools. The WoodSongs Coffeehouse is, simply put, just for you . . . your friends, community, your artists, your audience, your hometown. All of you can work together to create a stage for grassroots music in a fun, entertaining atmosphere that is respectful of the audience and the artists at the same time.

What a great way to celebrate this vital, exciting and growing musical art form, whether it's folk, blues, bluegrass, classical, country, old-timey, rap, poetry or new singer-songwriters.

And you're not alone . . . WoodSongs Coffeehouses are springing up in colleges and schools all over the country. Just think, while you organize the coffeehouse in your hometown, dozens of other schools are doing the exact same thing.

To make things run smoothly, we've come up with plan so that everyone will run the WoodSongs Coffeehouse with the same spirit of intent.

1. We give you the right to use the WoodSongs name at no charge
2. You promise to run a clean show that families can attend if they choose, you won't damage the reputation of the WoodSongs name and you will be fair with the artists who play the coffeehouse

This *WoodSongs Coffeehouse Startup Manual* is full of helpful ideas and suggestions to get you going.

Well, that's all I have to say. Thanks for starting WoodSongs Coffeehouse!

Folk on!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Durkin".

e-mail Michael at michael@woodsongs.com



Starting a WoodSongs Coffeehouse is easy.

By the term "coffeehouse" we mean a clean, acoustic, accessible listening space for artists and audiences to enjoy each other's music and encouragement. It can be anyplace in the school that is clean, accessible and easy for you to use.



STEP ONE:

Find a space to have the performances. No need to start big ... sometimes 15-30 friends make for a perfect start. We recommend:

- a) a study hall
- b) the music room
- c) lunchtime concerts in the cafeteria
- d) an after-school project

STEP TWO:

FACT: Artists love to play. Many students have a hidden talent, silent desire to play but are timid. Be encouraging. Be open. Be inviting. Of course, if your room is small like a study hall in a class room and the acoustics are good, chances are you won't need a sound system. If the space is larger, like the cafeteria, having a sound system is helpful.

Once you have the school's permission, the room secured, the day and time it will be held ... you are ready start.



STEP THREE:

BOOK THE ARTISTS Don't get stuck in the "guy with a guitar" mode ... there is so much great music and art out there. We've seen brilliant singer-songwriters performing with just a cello. Or a mountain lap dulcimer. Or a harp. And, sure, the guitar. Welcome it all: folk, blues, bluegrass, rap, poetry, classical. The audience only cares that they are passionate and good. Once you have the stage, the sound system (if needed), the artists booked ... you are ready to start!

BE ORGANIZED: a WoodSongs Coffeehouse should be more of an "open mic" than a concert. Have students sign up for a three song set, have another student or teacher moderate, like an MC.





STEP FOUR:

**PROMOTE IT. Get the word out. Spread the love.
Attract an audience. Start SMALL.**

30 friends in a class room is much easier to fill than 200 in the auditorium. PERCEPTION IS EVERYTHING!

WEBSITE and EMAIL:

It's Free. It's fast. It's simple. Start collecting email address of your music loving friends. Always ask first and get permission to add them to your list. Never spam them. Social media is ok ...

but remember: **Word of mouth publicity** is the best because you can feel the passion. Nothing works better than a fun event that everyone enjoys.

POSTERS and FLYERS:

Posters are tried and true and it always works. Show restraint, don't slap them on every locker. Ask permission first. Make smaller ones for hand outs. Place them wherever your audience might be. We provide a sample poster on 8.5x14" paper but you might make up your own. **Always use the WoodSongs logo on your publicity materials.** On our sample, notice there are not a lot of pictures cluttering up the artwork. Keep it simple, bold and easy to read. You would be surprised how many posters we've seen that forget to add the address, date or contact phone number.



MORNING PA ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Social media does not replace a good grassroots campaign. Word of mouth will always win for you. Sometimes other students and teachers can be surprisingly supportive. Especially if you approach them with respect and in an organized manner.

The less work you give them to do, the more they will do for you. For the school newspaper and morning PA announcements: write out your announce-



WoodSongs School Coffeehouse Startup Manual



ment as a complete thought, like this:

“The Jefferson High School WoodSongs Coffeehouse is this Thursday. The stage will be in the 5th and 6th period lunch time in the music room. Any student who wants to perform one to three songs or read their poetry can be part of it. Any student who would like to be in the audience and enjoy the performances are welcome. The WoodSongs Coffeehouse sign up sheet is in the music room.”

IT'S SHOW TIME!

1) **Start on time.** It shows a great respect to the audience and to the artists by starting when you promised you would. Feel free to act as host from stage, welcome your audience and always thank the volunteers for their efforts. Be positive. Be upbeat ... and be BRIEF.

2) **The sound should be clear ... not loud.** Here's a hint, the more REVERB you have the muddier the sound will be. So we recommend that you use NO REVERB. Also, **the louder the PA, the more likely you will have to deal with feedback.** Feedback is that annoying ear-piercing squeal that comes out of speakers when too many folks start screwing around with the knobs. So make sure only ONE person is allowed to touch your sound board.

How do I get help?

Remember this word: **VOLUNTEERS.**

People who love music and art also have the passion and spirit to pitch in and help. Put together a small team of volunteers who will assist the operation of your WoodSongs Coffeehouse series. It's easy, it's not a lot of work and it doesn't require a lot of time ... IF you stay organized.

Volunteers will put up posters, maintain your email newsletter, run your sound, clean up after the performance is done. Treat your volunteers with complete honesty and respect. Never give or-

WoodSongs School Coffeehouse Startup Manual

ders, “ask” them for their help. They are free to say NO to anything. But if they say YES, expect them to keep their word. And it is very important that you keep your word to them. You are setting the tone and spirit of your school, WoodSongs Coffeehouse and volunteer crew.

My room keeps filling up ... what do I do now?

The *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour* was built with patience. First it was in a 15 seat studio. Then a 70 seat studio. Then a 135 seat auditorium. Now it's in a 500 seat concert hall that fills up every week. If you have a 30 seat room that fills up with 30 people every concert, great! **Ask your audience first if they mind moving.** Maybe it's better and easier to stay right where you are. Remember, it's not how many people that matters ... it's the quality of the event. Can they hear? Can they see? Are the artists happy with the event? If the answer to all of these questions is yes, stay where you are!



Why should I try this? Because it's FUN. It elevates public awareness of the wonderful talent that your fellow students have to offer.

We already present music at a coffeehouse or club. Can I simply change it to a WoodSongs Coffeehouse? Absolutely! You've already put most of the idea in motion. Once you have officially signed up on our website, you can begin promoting the coffeehouse in your school or college right away.



Is my Coffeehouse broadcast on the radio?

No. The WoodSongs Coffeehouse is a local performance project just for your school. It puts the spirit and ideas of the national show into practice on a hometown level. It is not meant to be aired on the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour* or on local radio. However, folksinger Michael Johnathon will announce your school on the air if you send an email to: **Michael@WoodSongs.com**