

The Quilter's Calendar

Background:

Maggie Ball and Marguerita McManus are both authors of quilt books, published by Krause Publications, an imprint of F&W Media. They met at Quilt Market, Houston, 2007. Maggie freely shared her experiences as a professional author and traveling teacher with novice author Marguerita and Marguerita happily shared her marketing tips with Maggie. A friendship was born that regularly has each author sharing tips as she learns them.

Marguerita branched off into self-publishing and Maggie pursued a busy and rewarding traveling itinerary. They shot video together and learned about using it to enhance their presence in the quilting community.

Maggie's desire to increase her bookings led to some interesting conversations, reminding Marguerita of just how difficult it is for quilt guilds to find teachers to host for their guild classes. Bringing in a 'famous teacher' is a big expense to most guilds, something that most do only once or twice a year because of the expense. Getting guild members to agree on a teacher is another hurdle. Some guild members who might have had a chance to meet a quilt teacher at a show or other event can describe a teacher to the guild committee (and "make the sale", convincing the guild to book the teacher) but that only works just so often. Some guild members might be familiar with a teacher's books, and use them as a way of "presenting" the teacher's portfolio to the guild, but again, that's a hit-or-miss technique. Seriously, it's hard to understand just how *any* teacher ever gets a booking!

Marguerita remembered her experiences with her guild, and how difficult it was to convince a group of quilters how to spend a majority of their

annual teaching budget, and how difficult it was to have the materials to convince the members that a certain teacher was worth having, especially when several members each wanted their favorite teacher booked.

Making matters even more difficult, a teacher's schedule may not be compatible with the guild's calendar! Guild members have to go from teacher website to teacher website, looking for links to their teaching schedules, hoping for a good match. Talk about work! Once a teacher has a contract to teach for a guild, both the teacher and the booking guild often approach other nearby guilds to see if the nearby guild would also like to book the teacher, thereby sharing traveling expenses (between the two guilds) and giving the teacher and additional engagement. BUT, that's a lot of work, and many times the nearby guilds were already contracted with another teacher.

What if there were a single site, with all teacher engagements, that all guilds could refer to, to find and book teacher? For free? Wouldn't that benefit both the teachers {more engagements} and guilds {more chances to coordinate with other guilds and save money}. Sounds good, right?

Loving a challenge, Marguerita dove in. With a solid background in creating websites to serve quilters and designers/authors Marguerita had a good idea of what was needed but no idea of how to create the right site, but she went looking. She found an awesome plug-in, designed for Wordpress, her favorite platform, and a clean looking theme and she got started.

Keeping Maggie in mind she figured out how to customize the calendar plug-in; paid for the theme and a custom skin, a couple of domain names, some customized code; and started uploading teacher bookings. Debuting the site with over 850 teaching engagements and over 80 teacher profiles, she gave Maggie a premium placement and they both look forward to seeing the site grow and their teaching engagements increase.

By allowing teachers, show organizers and retreat organizers to advertise here Marguerita hopes to provide a good resource to traveling quilters and recoup some of the expenses of building and maintaining the site.

www.quilters-calendar.com