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Hands That Rock Raises Funds for Charity in a Smart, 'Touchy Feely' Way November 20, 2012 | By Ray Waddell

For those of you smart enough to be among the record-breaking attendance at the ninth annual Billboard Touring Conference Nov. 8-9 in New York, you might have wondered who those nice ladies were offering chair massages front-of-house and in the green room. That effort, particularly enjoyed by rockers like Warren Haynes and Mark Farner and soul powerhouse Tre Williams (who zoned out and almost had to be dragged off the chair to make it to his panel), was spearheaded through the grace of Darcy Lynch and Hands That Rock, a fund-raising offshoot of her Stage Hands touring massage therapy business. HTR's mission is to bring music programs to underserved communities throughout the United States.



LtoR: Darcy Lynch, Founder; Cindy Gottfried, Director of Marketing; Lori Braitwaite, Tour Coord; Tom Bensen, Chair.; of the Board, Anita Defrancesco, Massage Therapist, Lisa Treat, Tour Coord.

It's not really surprising that HTR received a profile boost this year through Kevin Lyman, producer of Vans Warped, Country Throwdown, Mayhem and other tours, and recipient of the Humanitarian Award at the 2010 Billboard Touring Awards. HTR began in earnest in May on Country Throwdown and was present on Lyman's other tours like Mayhem and Uproar, as well as such events as Bumbershoot in Seattle and Moogfest in Asheville, N.C.

HANDSTM that ROCK

Hands that Rock, Hands that Help



Kevin Lyman & Hands That Rock Therapist at Mayhem in Mansfield, MA

The for-profit work that Stage Hands does with touring artists gave Darcy the leverage to form nonprofit HTR. "We had a presence in the industry already because of the backstage work we do with celebrities on a global scale," Lynch says. "I went to Kevin Lyman with this idea for Hands That Rock and he said, 'This is brilliant. I'll help you out with this.' He's all about charitable fund-raising, so he's been a great partner for us. He purchased these branded tents, we had our logo trademarked, and he basically took them on tour with him."

In its first five months, HTR has worked 35 events, with 400 therapists on the road, totaling 118 consecutive days of fund-raising that netted approximately \$15,000. Most of that occurred during a record heat wave (people aren't so into massages when they're sweaty, apparently), "but it was still a breakthrough season for us," Lynch says.

The profile is growing: HTR will be on the Afterlife tour next year in Europe, Asia, Australia and the United States. It's all indoors, and Lynch says there will be five therapists at each show. The majority of the fund-raising done at concerts and festivals comes from front-of-house patrons, although they do place a couple of therapists backstage and in VIP areas. Rather than tour the therapists, Lynch pulls from a network of 700 practitioners worldwide. For a 20,000-capacity event, HTR might have six therapists on hand.

The way it works is HTR charges a fee (usually \$1 per minute), the therapist keeps 50% and 25%-30% goes to charity. The primary HTR charity is Little Kids Rock, an organization that provides music education programs to underserved communities. But HTR will also donate to local charities, as it has at events like Bumbershoot.



Hands That Rock Team in San Francisco, Mayhem Festival



HTR and Stage Hands draw from the same pool of therapists, but generally Lynch keeps the two programs separate. "I don't have a problem having a therapist come there early [under Stage Hands], but if [the artist] is not there for their scheduled massage, the therapist needs to be allowed to work [for HTR] until the artist is ready," Lynch says. In such cases, the Stage Hands fee would also go to charity. "The nice thing about having two organizations that are similar is it's kind of the same business model, but in a different context. So what we do is manage and coordinate tours and recruit qualified therapists where they're going. Now we just do it for charity."

Lynch's call to action is to get more people from the artist and touring community involved with HTR. "We really need to strengthen our board of directors," she says. "We do have some star power on the board-interestingly, we have a lot of drummers, like Kenny Aronoff [John Mellencamp, Bob Seger] and Franklin Vanderbilt from Lenny Kravitz's band, but we would like to have more musicians get involved and create partnerships like with Kevin Lyman, even if they're not on our board. We're looking for people who want to get involved."

(As an aside, Lyman is looking for music memorabilia for a charity auction to benefit the family of Mitch Lucker, singer for the band Suicide Silence, who died Oct. 31 in a motorcycle accident, leaving behind a daughter, Kenadee. Those interested in contributing should contact Julie Grant at [626-799-7188](tel:626-799-7188) [begin of the skype highlighting 626-799-7188 end of the skype highlighting.](#))

If music is a universal language, so is a good massage-and so is philanthropy. Just ask a soul singer, a classic-rock titan and a rock'n'roll Iron Man.