

# A Nashville Night in Norristown

By Christopher Dryka  
Correspondent

With the price of gas increasingly approaching the level of sheer insanity, it is getting harder and harder to justify taking distance trips for a decent night's entertainment. However, the chance to experience a Nashville-style evening of music and entertainment can be had locally on Saturday, May 20.

The Peanut Gallery's Acoustic Café will hold its first annual "In the Round" benefit show. This event, based on the "In the Round" format of the renowned Bluebird Café in Nashville, provides a unique intimate setting, where the performers interact with the audience as well as each other.

The bill includes several artists from around the country who will perform a broad range of musical styles. Los Angeles-based artist Jennifer Spears (no relation to Britney) will be performing with New York City- and Nashville-based songwriter Neil Herman. Regional songwriters Sherri Mullen and Jim Carolan will bring their eclectic blend of rock, pop, folk, blues and country to the stage.

Also sharing the stage will be local artists Rick Denzien and Debra Lee from Ambler. Denzien is the founder of the independent recording label Slot-1 and is currently recording a CD as the duo Lyra Project with his partner, Lee.

This benefit event is sponsored by the Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the Nashville Songwriter's Association (EPNSA). During a recent telephone interview, Lee explained that the "mission of the association is to create

opportunities" for local songwriters. She also shared her "In the Round" experiences.

Lee revealed that this specific format lends itself to a more intimate experience between the audience and



Organizers of the Nashville-style "In the Round" concert and performing in it are Ambler's Debra Lee and Rick Denzien.

performers. "They feed off each other ... it is part of the process of creating ambience and good vibes," Lee explained.

The Bluebird Café is a famous Nashville venue with a storied tradition. "You go [there] with the hope of being discovered," said Lee. "It is a stepping stone for careers." Though this is an inaugural event, Lee said, "The next one will have auditions for regional songwriters," and will ultimately be an annual benefit.

Raised in Quakertown and living in Ambler for the past couple of years, Lee describes herself as a "lifelong musician." She studied music at West Chester University as well as the Westminster Choir College and is now a music and voice teacher. "It is a lifelong study," said Lee.

"You get better as you keep going."

Lee and Denzien share their love of music with the community by hosting songwriting workshops at their studio once a month. "We do

our best to support local music [and] this is a real nice way to share the art of songwriting," Lee explained.

Although the Peanut Gallery Acoustic Café is a rather new venue, Lee said, "It is very supportive of local music." Rattling off the list of performers, she said, "It is exciting to see people from around the country coming [to the Peanut Gallery]". The "In the Round" bill boasts a well-rounded range of performers, some with broader talents than just music.

Jennifer Spears, who has a production-development and publishing deal with the LA/Nashville-based BME label, has shared her songwriting talents worldwide and is poised to jump into the next phase of her career. She will perform with Neil Herman, a well-versed musician who has won several songwriting contests and has also had his songs appear on "Saturday Night Live" and Nickelodeon.

Sherri Mullen is the creator of a popular Internet radio show as well as the co-host of a Central Pennsylvania cable TV show that showcases the musical talents of local and national independent artists. Mullen will share the "round" with Jim Carolan, an award-

Continued on page 14



**IF YOU GO**

**"In the Round"**  
Nashville-style benefit show will take place at the Peanut Gallery's Acoustic Café, Logan Square Shopping Center 1832 Markley St., Norristown, Saturday, May 20, 8 p.m. Cover charge: \$7. Info: 610-275-4777 or [www.peanutgallerymusiccafe.com](http://www.peanutgallerymusiccafe.com).



Neil Herman and Jennifer Spears will also perform in the "In the Round" concert at Saturday, May 20.

## Nashville comes to Norristown's Peanut Gallery Acoustic Café

Continued from page 7

winning songwriter with five single-song publishing deals and also the EPNSA chapter leader.

Performances begin at 8 p.m. and the cover charge is \$7. The Peanut Gallery Acoustic Café is a non-smoking venue complete with full menu (including beer, wine, and spirits). For more information call 610-275-4777, or visit [www.peanutgallerymusiccafe.com](http://www.peanutgallerymusiccafe.com). This truly unique night is for anyone interested in an evening of exceptional entertainment and great food. As Lee so succinctly put it, "If I weren't in it, I'd go!"