

# Sebastian

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1986

## Modeling Agency Opens In Sebastian

By MIKE LEE

The B&D International modeling agency is the new kid on the block in Sebastian. That's right, not New York or Paris, but a modeling agency right here in Sebastian.

The story begins in July 1985 with Bonnie Fey. She was the coordinator of the Miss Sebastian Beauty Contest during the summer. Afterward, she realized the modeling potential of young people in the area and thought about opening an agency here.

She and her fiancé, Damien Gilliams, discussed the idea and decided to make it a reality.

"The fire was under our feet," Gilliams says about their eagerness to start an agency in Sebastian.

"We wanted to get into a growing area and we thought Sebastian was the place to be," Ms. Fey says.

The idea of having no competition and being in a growth area was inviting to both of them for other reasons as well.

"You're in the middle of two growing cities," Gilliams says about Vero Beach and Melbourne. "Being in Sebastian gives us access to both areas."

They purchased property, obtained a modeling license and are preparing to open the doors to their business soon.

Without officially opening, however, they already have begun their modeling ventures.

After the Miss Sebastian contest, Ms. Fey was contacted by a movie company in New York that was planning to do some filming in the area. Jim Ingrassia, director of the film "Sunstroke U.S.A.," needed a make-up specialist and had heard that Ms. Fey was qualified for the job.

She has had experience as a make-up artist with various modeling agencies in New York and was hired by Ingrassia to handle make-up for the movie.

Ms. Fey and Gilliams say that the movie has given their agency a boost in that they have provided much of the talent for the film.

The agency ran advertisements in the Press-Journal for casting for "Sunstroke U.S.A." and the response was surprising.

"We had a very positive response from the ads," she says.

Many young people who had



acted before or were interested in doing so responded to the advertisements, she says.

"We wanted to get the people in the area into the movie," she says.

Gilliams says the idea behind that was to establish the agency's presence in the area and give young people exposure they would not normally get.

Young people chosen for roles in the movie not only made a connection with a modeling agency, but also eluded some of the arduous tasks that normally accompany getting into acting.

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**Bonnie Fey**

"They've missed about 15 steps up the ladder," Gilliams says about being chosen for the film.

And working jointly with the movie company, Sunstroke Films, has been equally beneficial for the agency.

"Everywhere we go, people say they have heard of us," Ms. Fey says.

Beyond the movie, the agency is

trying to establish itself with other clients who sell their products using good-looking people in advertisements on television and in newspapers, he says.

Advertisers look for certain people to suit their needs. An advertiser for a tooth paste looks for someone with a gleaming smile and shiny white teeth. Another advertiser for a jewelry store would look for someone with smooth skinned hands and nice nails, she says.

Gilliams and Ms. Fey believe their agency will be able to supply advertisers with the people they're looking for, he says.

"We are both smart enough and aggressive enough to get these people," he says.

The agency works like this: A potential candidate is invited in for an interview. If the candidate is accepted by the agency, a marketing strategy is devised to expose the new model to various advertising clients.

"We find them contacts and get them jobs," she says.

The models are placed in different fashion categories which is determined by their physical makeup. Some models are suited to wear swimsuits and others are made for formal wear, he says as an example.

Pictures of models are placed on an agency "head sheet" and are sent out to various businesses and other modeling and advertising agencies. The bulk of their clients are advertising agencies, she says.

Once the potential client has chosen a model through the use of the head sheet and portfolios, an interview — called a "Go See" — is set up where the model actually goes and sees the client, she says.

If the client chooses that model, a salary is negotiated by the agency between the client and model and they receive a commission, she says.

Ms. Fey says the advantage a model has in belonging to an agency is not only the exposure, but also protection against clients who may take advantage of them.

"An agency protects them against anything," she says.

They say they took a chance opening an agency here, but hope soon to make Sebastian known for more than just fishing.