Watts-Up

Husband-wife team takes on Farmington Founders Festival

hat's in a name? Just ask Mike and Sandra Watts of Watts-Up Inc.
"We had to get a name. Then one of my buddies called and asked, What's up? — I thought what a great name for a company," said Mike Watts of Plymouth Township.

what a great name for a company, sold Mike Watts of Plymouth Township.

Watts Upi Inc. - alias Mike and Bandra Watts - was hired to manage the Farmington Area Founders Festival. The couple was given a three-year contract by the newly organized Farmington Area Founders Festival Inc. That means the Farmington Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce is getting out of the festival business.

If you recognize their names, there's a reason, Mike and Sandra Watts are known for managing the popular and successful Plymouth International Ice Spectacular, as well as the Smooth Jazz Festival in Southfield, and the Hot Country Jam and the Hosdown in Detroit. They also organized Ted Nugent's 50th birthday party and have a long history of working in the entertainment field, including concerts and special events.

"I'm glad we got into the spe-

events.
"I'm glad we got into the special events business," Watts said.
"People still love entertainment.
They want to do things with
they families. But entertainment can be cost prohibitive."

Entertaining

Entertaining
The entertainment business is not new to Watts, although he may have sort of stumbled into it as a student at Eastern Michigan University. "I always worked on homecomings and organized fraternity activities."
Watts said.

About that same time in the

About that same time in the late 1960s, early 1970s, concerts were a big thing on college campuses. Watts worked for the university's student activities pro-

versity's student activities program.
"Well, they couldn't do the administrative kind of thing. The concert series was about to go under. They had tickets sold everywhere. Bo my boss asked if wanted to take it over," Watts said.
Sure enough. By the third year, Watts was operating a winning effort. "Everything sold out except this new and up and coming act — a guy named Neil Diamond."

ing act - a guy named Nell Dia-mond."
Watter goal even in those days was to give his audience diversi-ty - something for everyone. That's one reason why he booked Duke Ellington.
"Well the university would only give me a standard raise so it was time to move on. A local promoter - Bamboo Productions offered me a job." Armed with a master's degree in counseling

Paderation now endorses it.
"Last year we gave out four gold medals, three went to students," Sandra said.

Methods

Jointly: Sandra and Mike Watts have been hired to manage the Founders Festival, beginning this year. They were given a three-year contract by the newly organized Farmington Area Founders Festival Inc. That means the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce is getting out of the festival business.

A light bulb went on. Why work for someone else when you can do it yourself? Watts-Up Inc. was born. Since the birth of their busi-ness, Mike and Sandra Watts have become synanyous with

have become synonymous with entertainment, including festi-

vals of all kinds.

About nine years ago, they got a call from Plymouth city officials. The famed ice festival was dying. "At the time we didn't have a winter event, so we decid-

have a winter event, so we decided to go for it.

"It has turned out to be one of the most rewarding that wo work on," Watts said.
So big is the ice featival getting that Bandra Watts has developed an educational component. The American Culinary

vals of all kinds.

and guidance, Watts hesitated taking a promotions job. The hesitation didn't last for long. Bamboo Productions actually got so big it opened the Silverdome in Pontiac with The Who in

Love and marriage

While he was at EMU, a young woman who worked as secretary to the dean of students – Mike's boss – caught his eye. On Feb. 1 Mike and Sandra went out. On March 1 they were engaged and by Bept. 11 wedding bells were receiver.

by Sopt. It weating hells were ringing.

As their three sons were coming along, Watts left Bamboo Productions for a few years because a busy schedule of 200 concerts across the country was busy from a growing family.

Bo I took a job in South Carrier was the start of the second of the south Carrier was the start of the second of the sec

oline as a marketing services director. "The weather was great, but nothing else was. I Birth of a business

didn't like the life down there

didn't like the life down thero. Leaving this area made me realize what we had up here. Though Sandra elways helped Mike in his business, she decided to return to college, got a teaching certificate and became an acting director at the Gibson School for the Giffed in Redford. She left six years ago.

School for the Gifted in Redford. She left six years ago.

After a short atint with Bamboo Productions on his return to Michigan, Watte later took a job with Olympia Arenas. That was a great experience. Up to that point I had just done rock 'n' roll concerts. I got to bring hig-time wreatling to Michigan." College hockey, Seeme Street programs and the circus also found a place on Watta' resume.

on Watts' resume.

Like Bamboo Productions, the Olympic Arena went out, "At the time it was devastating. We had little kids then," Watts said.

Police talk man out of suicide

BY LARRY O'CONNOR

Fermington Hills police officers talked a man out of committing suicide early in the morning of July

The two-hour ordeal ended when the man threw down the knife he used to cut his arm and come off agas station roof on 10 Mile Road. The Bouthfield man, 29, was distraught over his marriage break up and had been drinking, police reports said.

At 2:23 a.m., July 4, police went to the Shell gas station after a 911 call and found a man on the roof with box razor threatening to kill himself.

Police set up a perimeter with Hills EMS technicians nearby. The man continued pacing on top of the roof, saying he would cut his wrists and threat forficers tred to climb up after him.

He said his wife recently filed for a divorce and had a personal protection order against him.

Chief Bill Lower commended Lt. Paul Cavan and Officer Wayne Beerlower for their work during ordeal. The two-hour ordeal ended when the man threw

ing ordeal.

"I thought they did in excellent job, in particular
officer Beerhower for the amount of time he apent
talking to the subject," Dwyer asid. "He probably
saved this person from death."

A recommendation will be made to the Awards and Citation Board for a possible lifesaving award,

and Citation Board for a possible hierarying awaru, Dwyer said.

He asked to have his estranged wife at the scene so she could watch him die to make a statement, but police refused.

At one point, he bent over and opened a wide goals on his forearm with a razor that is used to cut

cardboard boxes.

Police contacted his wife who said he had been

Police contacted his wife who said he had been drinking heavily since \$5.30 p.m.

Beerbower talked to the man and asked him to think about his 3-year-old son. He appeared to be tired and willing to listen but then used the knife to cut at a power line, which had been turned off Officers put a ladder near a satellite dish fixture, which police believed the man used to get onto the roof. He finally discarded the knife and came down so the ladder.

on the ladder.
EMS treated the man at the scene and then
rushed him to Botsford Hospital. He had three
cuts on his left foreman, including one 31/2 inches
long and 1-inch deep.
An emergency room doctor said the man cut two
to three tendons that lead to the fingers, but they
were not completely severed, police said.

Order from page A1

advice for traffic violators is to avoid rewriting history. Judges and magistrates usually have a person's driving or criminal record in front of them.

Some still don't listen, though.

"It never fails," McKenzie said. "A person goes before the judge and says they have a squeaky clean driving record, and their driving record is a yard-stick long."

CLARIFICATION

and going to work.

"We enjoy the challenge of seaing if we can do it better. Our
and with the Farmington featival is to bring more and morepeople to Farmington. We have,
to make it a destination for peole, "Mike said.

Connections. The's what Mike
oped over the years to help make
an enormous event manageable—
and fun.

- and fun.

The event is just a culmination of months of work. The event itself is the easy part.

want iteelf is the easy part.
Watta said.
Now Mike and Bandra Watta
provide giant binders full of their
events and festivals. For any
media type, the books are heaven, with schedules, phone numbers and photographs – taken
with a digital camera.

I had hired a photographer.
But all I was getting was head
chots – which I can get free from
any agency, Watta said.

To me, I wanted photographs
of the crowds, the singers with
the crowde Now I'm into the digtial age with a digital camera.

And the results are breathase,
ing.

And the results are breathtak-ing. "We try to stay up with tech-nology. We want to keep the events new and fresh. Defing the same event, no matter how good, gets boring for everyone," Watta

Career choices

Career choices

A fun joh? You bet. Even for
the Watts' three sons: Christopher, Nicholas and Michael - all
who attend the University of
Michigan.
Mike and Sandra are certain
their careers have been fun for
the kids. Sure, there were times
they didn't get to bed on time.
But they sure met plenty of
stars.

But they sure met pienty or stars.

"One of the neat things about this career is that I got to be part of a major concert scene before people figured out how to do it. We kind of invented how to do things as we went along - out of necessity.

"At the time I started - with Traffic Duke Pillington, Jehro

"At the time I started - with 'Traffic, Duke Ellington, Jethro Tull, Rod Stowart, Neil Diamond, Tom Petty and the Hentherakers and even Garth Brooks - it was a great time in music. And ticket priess were reasonable. There wasn't any cable TV."

In their living room, Sandra and Michael Watts proudly diamonable med Journey platinum album - given to them by the band.

"When I go to do a group libe the Rolling Stones - yeah, I was excited. But otherwise I was too husy."

Methods
If you can't imagine organizing and managing feativals and activities that draw hundreds or thousands of people, don't worry. Mike and Sandra Watts have it down to a science.
They start every morning together working out 4t a health club, followed by breakfast. "We start and talk. We kind of just hang out," Sandra said.
Mike Watts says the creativity is in organizing these enormous events. "We get to deal with a lot of interesting people. I was never that comfortable putting on a tie

