



Nomination for the 2012 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year

Debra Adams, Board Member for Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods, Inc. (CHUN) and Steering Committee Member for the CHUN Capitol Hill People's Fair

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1. Debra Adams' involvement with the Capitol Hill People's Fair dates back to 1978, when the festival was held at East High School, on a much smaller scale than it is today. Debra and her mother worked for a few years selling balloons to fairgoers as they entered the fairgrounds, helping to create a fun, festive atmosphere at the event! From 1978 on, Debra has worked consistently every year with the exception of two years when she enjoyed being a patron of the event! Some of the other volunteer jobs Debra had were: working in a beer booth, selling beer with other CHUN volunteers; working with the Exhibitor Relations crew to help oversee the artists, nonprofits and other vendors and helping to ensure that these groups had an enjoyable and successful People's Fair! Debra also did Best in Show judging, and helped select the winners among the artists exhibiting at the fair; working the souvenir booths for three years; and finally (and most recently) heading up our Sponsor Relations team.

Debra Adams has been a board member of Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods for roughly the last 17 years. She has served as President of the organization as well as Vice President of Community Affairs. She has also served on the People's Fair Steering Committee for many years, which serves as an advisory board for the staff in producing the festival. The Steering Committee meets every month from January through the event in June, and oversees each aspect of the fair. Steering Committee members include volunteers who oversee Sponsor Relations (Debra), food vendors, entertainment, arts & crafts, beverages, site set up, security, festival greening and more! Because Debra serves on the board and on the Steering Committee, she has a unique perspective in that she helps oversee the operations of CHUN – a nonprofit, registered Denver neighborhood organization, and the People's Fair – a celebration of community and kickoff to the summer festival season. Both of these volunteer jobs are very involved and Debra meets with the staff, board, and community leaders year-round to support the organization, the People's Fair and the Greater Capitol Hill (Denver) community.

2. Roles and responsibilities (broken down between her CHUN and People's Fair roles):
As it relates to CHUN, Debra serves as an At-Large Delegate representing our entire boundaries – 1st Ave. to 22nd Ave. and Colorado Blvd to Broadway in Denver. These boundaries incorporate roughly 22 other neighborhood groups including (but not limited to): Cherry Creek North, Congress Park, Alamo Placita, South City Park, Capitol Hill, City Park West, Uptown, and parts of Five Points. In her role as CHUN Board Member, Debra also serves as a CHUN representative on the Neighborhood Advisory Committee for the Denver Botanic Gardens. She regularly attends meetings and events in Greater Capitol Hill, representing the interests of our neighbors, and working to improve our community.

As it relates to the People's Fair, Debra serves on our Steering Committee, as our Sponsor Relations representative. In the months leading up to the People's Fair, Debra meets with the staff to check-in and brainstorm sponsor recruitment as well as to help conceptualize onsite activations for various sponsors. Debra also attends monthly Steering Committee meetings where we give updates on the planning and production and think through creative ideas for constantly improving the festival. During setup, Debra works with our staff to hang sponsor banners, setup activation areas and trouble-shoot any potential issues that may arise. During the weekend of the event, Debra visits with all People's Fair sponsors to check-in, distribute snacks and beverages, and oversee the success of the activations. When we have potential future sponsors onsite to check out the event, Debra meets with them and shows them around the site, noting potential locations for their booths/activations.

3. Debra is very involved with planning and producing the People's Fair, and brings with her a wealth of experience and historical knowledge of the event as a volunteer dating back to 1978. Because she has been leading our Sponsor Relations team for more than 15 years, her expertise is critical in the success of our corporate sponsorship program. Debra has seen many different sponsor relationships over the years and has a solid understanding of how to successfully run the sponsorship program. When the CHUN/People's Fair staff decided to bring the corporate sponsorship program in-house, Debra's expertise and insights helped to make for a smooth transition. Debra's ideas on specific sponsors to approach for support as well as how to keep them happy onsite are paramount to the success of the People's Fair sponsorship program.

Debra's enthusiasm for CHUN and the People's Fair knows no bounds – even after decades of volunteering at the fair (in different capacities), Debra always looks forward to the event and her excitement is contagious for the staff, who at times get so wrapped up in the minutiae of producing a huge festival, that we forget that we are all here to have fun! When things get very busy in the setup and opening hours of the festival, Debra reminds us all of what an incredible opportunity we have to bring to life an amazing community event. She checks in with our staff during the festival to make sure that we are having fun, and we always look forward to a point at the fair (usually Sunday) when we have the opportunity to sit with Debra and enjoy some of our delicious festival food and lemonade!

4. Debra shows initiative in her efforts by helping us to conceptualize and plan the activities at each year's People's Fair. She proactively brainstorms ways to improve the festival, whether it is a new potential sponsor, a new activation for a returning sponsor, or even considering other aspects of the festival and how to continue to make them even better! An example of this is would be – one year, we had mistakenly ordered an extra 20' x 20' canopy and did not need it for a sponsor. Debra suggested that rather than having our tent company break the canopy down, we utilize the canopy and create a covered picnic area in one of our food courts! The tables and chairs were already in place, and we had the tent company simply move the canopy over the seating area. We had not considered covering these tables and chairs, but that weekend, the weather was particularly warm, and the covered picnic area was a huge hit!

Debra's style of leadership is supportive and caring. She works alongside with our staff and volunteers and gives suggestions when needed, and she also compliments others on their hard work, creativity and enthusiasm. When Debra makes a suggestion for future improvement, it is done in a very supportive and nurturing way – our staff and volunteers appreciate hearing her suggestions, and feeling the support that she gives us all. We never feel criticized by Debra, she always presents her ideas as a form of constructive critique. When things get busy and somewhat chaotic during the setup of the People's Fair, any troubleshooting that Debra does with our staff is always even-toned and supportive. Debra never shows frustration or anger; she is always calm and cool and helps keep those around her calm as well!

5. Debra is VERY dependable and reliable! Whether it is a community meeting or event, or anything related to the People's Fair, Debra never promises anything that she doesn't deliver on! Debra attends almost every meeting related to CHUN and the People's Fair – in the seven years that I have worked with her, I can't remember her missing a Steering Committee meeting (and if she has to miss a CHUN meeting, it is due to illness or her demanding work schedule!). Debra regularly meets with staff outside of our formal meetings to check in and see how things are going.

During setup of the People's Fair, Debra is there for the many hours that it takes to set up our event! She arrives at the park when the staff does, and stays until the very last person leaves the fairgrounds. Our hours are long and the work is demanding for the setup and hours of the event – and Debra is always there. Not only is she present physically, she is always available to answer questions, advise our staff, and check in with the sponsors. Debra's dependability has created such a positive atmosphere for our staff, we couldn't imagine producing the People's Fair without her!

6. As mentioned earlier, Debra is always cool and calm, even when things get hectic in the execution of the event! She is always smiling and happy, her love of the People's Fair (and CHUN) is genuine and contagious!

In the 35 years that Debra has been involved with the People's Fair, she has seen staff and volunteers come and go, as well as the festival itself go through a number of changes. Some of my favorite moments at the People's Fair are simply sitting with Debra and hearing funny and heartwarming stories about previous festivals. If I am upset or frustrated with a challenging issue onsite, all I (or any of us) need to do is talk with Debra – she calms us down and often helps keep things in perspective for us. If one of us is struggling with a challenging vendor, Debra can share a story of a similar situation at a previous People's Fair, and how the issue was resolved in a positive manner.

7. "The idea of producing the People's Fair without Debra Adams is unimaginable," said Roger Armstrong, CHUN Executive Director. "Her involvement in ALL levels of the planning and production is critical to the success of the event." While Debra's official role with the People's Fair is sponsor relations, she does so much more than that. Debra educates other CHUN board members who may be less aware of the importance and significance of the event to the success of CHUN. She teaches these board members that CHUN as a neighborhood organization only exists as it does because of the People's Fair – without the Fair, CHUN would be very limited on its reach into the community. There would be no CHUN staff without the People's Fair, and our community programming and involvement would be limited.

Debra also encourages our board members to get involved and volunteer at the People's Fair. She works alongside our staff with conceptualizing and planning each year's People's Fair, and helps us work through issues which can affect the fair, for example, construction to Civic Center Park and the surrounding streets – the venue for the People's Fair. Debra also helps us plan elements of the fair such as: attractions for kids and families at the festival; elements for the PR and Marketing

campaign; involvement by our community supporters; activations for our corporate sponsors; and many, many more! Without Debra's presence onsite, our staff would feel an enormous void as Debra is heavily involved with the set up for the event and the running of the festival during the event hours. She physically helps hang banners and set up sponsor booths, enabling other staff to focus on other aspects of site setup. As mentioned earlier, Debra helps keep the staff calm and thinking clearly when responding to issues which arise. All in all, Debra is a huge part of the People's Fair, and has been for 35 years. She is truly irreplaceable for us!

***Thank you for your consideration of Debra Adams for the
2012 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year Award!***