

A. INDIVIDUAL SUBMITTING NOMINATION INFORMATION:

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B. NOMINATION INFORMATION:

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C. NOMINATION QUESTIONS:

1. Explain your volunteer's significant depth of involvement. (20 points)

Jennifer May-Dennis is integral to the San Antonio Highland Games and Celtic Music Festival, an annual two-day festival that celebrates Scottish and Celtic heritage through dance, music, storytelling, and traditional Scottish athletic events. Jennifer served as Secretary or Vice President of the San Antonio Highland Games Association (SAHGA) 2004 – 2010. Since 2011, Jennifer has held the position of President of the Association. Jennifer understands the goals and purposes of the organization better than most people. She is a guiding voice for the organization and has made numerous contributions in so many different areas. She came to the organization with excellent qualifications and a passion for service. Whether she is contributing as Secretary, Committee Chairperson to the Board of Directors, or President, Jennifer takes on the roles and responsibilities seamlessly. She has contributed to several enhancements for the organization including: improving the organization's budget process, attending training to file taxes annually, instituting a survey process to gather feedback necessary to improve each year, meeting with potential sponsors regularly, creating an inventory process for organization assets, and bringing innovative ideas year after year to take our festival to the next level. After attending last year's TFEA conference, she created the concept of a mascot for our festival, designed the costume, created the story, and used a Face Book poll to get fans engaged in the naming of our new mascot, Bonnie Sue – The Loch Medina Monster of the San Antonio Highland Games and Celtic Music Festival. The Mascot was featured at events throughout the year as well as at our festival to build excitement, greet guests, play with children and cheer on the athletes. Jennifer invited mascots from other festivals and corporations to compete with Bonnie Sue in a Mascot Caber Toss Throwdown where she challenged the Guinness Pint, Clucky from Golden Chick and few other friends to compete in a Caber Toss. Jennifer also created our first annual Haggis Eating Contest in 2012. The event overflowed with spectators and generated a lot of excitement in social media and for the attendees. Jennifer also worked with our performers to help expand our educational opportunities adding the following Music & Cultural Workshops: Scottish Cooking, Archery demonstrations, Irish Singing, Stage Presence, Irish Harp History & Technique, the Concertina, Poetry & Music of Robert Burns, and the Bouzouki.

As if that wasn't enough, Jennifer continues to recruit, motivate and develop other volunteers of the organization. She has initiated an annual summer planning conference and board of directors training so that individuals can learn and grow as well as work as a cohesive team to improve the annual festival year after year. In her position at the helm of the Highland Games, Jennifer has spent countless hours pursuing opportunities with the best and brightest leaders of festivals and events across the country to ensure that the SAHGA board of directors has every opportunity to make the Highland Games one of the greatest festivals of the year. She introduced Guest Speakers like Pete Van de Pute , Owner of Dixie Flag Company and IFEA Hall of Fame inductee, to present to the Board of Directors various options for utilizing banners and signage throughout the games, as well as demonstrate examples of how other events evolved through use of sign and banner imagery.

2. Show specific examples of your volunteers roles and responsibilities. (10 points)

Jennifer May-Dennis serves as President of the San Antonio Highland Games Association and committee chair of multiple committees. She has served on the Finance, Publicity, Grounds & Set Up, Hospitality, Merchandising, Safety, Dance, Scottish Activities, Living History, Volunteers, Athletics, Kid's Glen, Clans, Celtic Dogs, and Membership committees. As President, Jennifer is always available to represent the organization in the community and with potential sponsors. In 2011, she met with the San Antonio Spurs for publicity opportunities, contacted multiple media outlets for coverage, filmed teasers and stories for a local television station, and recruited multiple new sponsors. Under her direction, the organization implemented a Board of Directors education program and executed a very successful Strategic Planning Conference. Through Jennifer's role as the Publicity & Marketing Committee Chair she has developed a relationship with the publicity agency for Disney Pixar's Brave. She included the Brave marketing team in the children's activity to promote a wonderful movie with like goals – celebrate Scottish history and traditions. She continued the relationship by planning a prescreening premiere party for the movie that included Celtic dancers and bag pipers.

Through everything she does, Jennifer is 100% committed to fulfilling the San Antonio Highland Games mission of sharing the history and culture of Scottish Activities with the community at large. She uses her personal vacation time to attend workshops, conventions, seminars to improve games. She believes in reaching out to other non-profit groups and has encouraged SAHGA to help sponsor other non-profit groups like Lone Star Play Ball which helps empower, encourage, and support individuals in exploring and developing their talents in spite of physical, learning, or other challenges.

3. Describe how your volunteer has provided significant enthusiasm, organizational assistance and specific expertise. (10 points)'

Jennifer has provided a tremendous amount of knowledge, organizational skills, and abilities to SAHGA through her many years of work and experience in festivals, non-profit work, and volunteer work. Jennifer May-Dennis has been a key volunteer since 2004. Her passion for inspiring others through her commitment to service and community is evident in every interaction. She is great to work with and her enthusiasm is contagious. Because of her work on behalf of the organization, we have seen each area of our festival grow year over year. As President, she has helped increase festival attendance by 35%. Her leadership and participation in many committees has not only encouraged the existing volunteers to become more engaged, but it has also encouraged additional people she comes in contact with to join the association and volunteer at the games. She continues to expand membership and volunteers year after year. As the volunteer coordinator, she reached out to local corporations as well as the United Way to get hundreds of volunteers from corporate, school, and other non-profit groups during the Highland Games. Using her professional expertise in managing people, she created a volunteer appreciation program to include a volunteer hospitality section, a Chili Cook-off, and providing volunteer t-shirts to create a unique volunteer experience each year and ensure repeating volunteers. As a result of this focus, she has successfully recruited key volunteers & new board members (3 directors, 2 officers and 4 committee chairs).

Jennifer is a highly capable, highly motivated volunteer. The organizational skills and ideas that she brings to SAHGA give new life to the Association providing focus for creating consistent procedures which save time and money. She created an extensive emergency action plan for the San Antonio Highland Games that she shared with the City of Helotes to be used as an example for all other festivals in the city. Jennifer's service has also evolved from working directly with the community to becoming a mentor and example for other charitable organizations. This year she planned and hosted the National Conference for Festival Coordinators for the Association of Scottish Games and Festivals. During this time she shared her experience in negotiating with hotels for rooms, restaurants for food, and booking a venue large enough for her large group. She also presented on the use of internet and social media to boost

exposure and volunteerism. On top of these local activities, during the 2011 Association of Scottish Games and Festivals annual Regional Meeting, Jennifer was elected vice-president of that organization and assigned the task of heading the committee to re-design their website and hold quarterly educational seminars for members of their organization

4. Explain how your volunteer has shown initiative and leadership in his or her efforts. (20 points)

Jennifer wants to make every year's festival better than the last. Part of her focus comes from awareness that Highland Games shut down every year due to lack of interest and funding. In 2011, for example, Houston cancelled their event after 50 years of annual festivals. Jennifer stays up to date on what is happening in our festival genre and communicates to our board of directors regularly. She knows that we have to learn from those who are struggling and also offer to help get them back on track. She has recruited a few of our officers to assist other Texas Games that have are in danger of closing or reopen those that have closed. To ensure our success Jennifer works tirelessly to show people the entertainment, cultural, and historic value of each component of our festival. She adds new events and activities to the festival to keep people coming year after year.

Everyone that comes in contact with Jennifer admires her passion and her dedication to the community. She works a full time job as a Director at USAA, has juggled part time school and continuing education for her job, and is a highly engaged volunteer for numerous non-profit groups both locally and nationally. Of the 160 hours that she took in vacation time during 2011-2012, she spent 140 of it serving the community and improving the organizations that she works with. Just as she has risen within the ranks of USAA, she has risen within the ranks of the volunteer organizations that she supports. They too have seen her organizational abilities, her passion, her leadership capabilities, and her dedication. During this time she also served as a National Delegate for the Girl Scouts, The President of the Board of Directors for the San Antonio Highland Games, the Vice President of the Association of Scottish Games and Festivals and served as a committee member for Epsilon Sigma Alpha. These leadership positions do not come to new volunteers, they are offered to exceptional community leaders who have been part of the organization at all levels and for a long time. For example, Jennifer was an Association Delegate for the Girl Scouts in 2005 and she was a Cookie Manager and Association Chair in 2008. She is now a National Delegate for the Girl Scouts. In 2005 she served as a Publicity Committee member for the San Antonio Highland Games Association. In 2008 she served as the Volunteer Development Chair for the Board of Directors. She is now the President of the Board of Directors. In each of these organizations she has made a lasting impact on the community and more importantly on the individuals that she serves.

5. Tell how your volunteer has exemplified his or her dependability. (10 points)

For the past two-and a – half years, Jennifer has been president of the San Antonio Highland Games and Celtic Music Festival. No one in the organization works as hard as Jennifer. If there is work to be done, she is the first there and the last to leave. She is truly "hands on". Jennifer travels extensively for work, and to attend other festivals, seminars and workshops to continuously learn and grow. She has spent many hours attending seminars and researching methods to help grow the Association's brand and presence in the San Antonio community which she shared with the Board of Directors and championed into fruition. No matter how far she travels, she does not miss participating in monthly board meetings or committee meetings. She also recently instated conference call capabilities so our other board members can still attend meetings when geographically separated. Jennifer can be counted on to help anyway she may be needed. She will organize supplies and equipment for booth events, meet with potential sponsors, Jennifer will honestly volunteer to be anywhere and everywhere and will be there early and stay late.

On top of that, she still found time for an ongoing relationship with the Girl Scouts of San Antonio as well as volunteering to assist with the Scottish Society of San Antonio's annual Burns Night banquet and dance. She has served as a National Delegate, Association Chair, Council Trainer, Service Unit Director and Event Coordinator, Gold Award Mentor and Committee Chair for the Girl Scouts. She was elected Vice President of the National Association of Scottish Games and Festivals, and has planned and hosted the national conference for festival coordinators and created a new series of quarterly webinars for members. She is an active member of Epsilon Sigma Alpha and has volunteered for multiple

organizations to include ProjectMEND, St. Judes, Bulverde Public Library, SA Food Bank, Easter Seals, Children's Bereavement Center, Salvation Army and many more. She also serves on the Way and Means Committee to create new fundraising ideas. For any one of those roles, it would be an accomplishment to stay organized. Jennifer is the most organized, dependable person and has proved successful in taking care of every detail possible to make the San Antonio Highland Games and Celtic Festival better each growing year.

6. Describe your volunteer's positive attitude. (10 points)

It is hard to imagine, but Jennifer's real passion begins when she exits work every day. She always rises to the occasion and the challenge with a positive attitude and with excellence. In 2011 Jennifer spent 1400+ hours volunteering in the community. While we are recognizing Jennifer for the year of 2012, we should also step back and realize that this is a way of life for her, not just an incredible year. Jennifer has been among the top of the list for volunteer hours at her Fortune 150 employer, USAA. She has a passion for serving in our community that is extraordinary. Jennifer is always excited about new efforts and increasing awareness of our mission to educate the people of South Texas about the Celtic culture that shaped our community. Perhaps the most important aspect of Jennifer's commitment is that she manages to do all these voluntary activities with a cheerful and sunny disposition. She always has an "alternate route" when things go awry. Jennifer has become everyone's sounding board. The San Antonio Highland Games Association as a group can be very passionate. Jennifer is supportive when members are fired up and then slowly introduce other's point of view for consideration. She understands the problems and needs in working with an all volunteer organization. She looks for peaceful solutions and over the last 5 years the organization has realized a more harmonious board of directors.

Because of her outgoing personality, Jennifer has been able to reach out to other organizations in the San Antonio area and show them how we can work with them to get them more exposure in the community; while at the same time, she is helping SAHGA to grow because more organizations are getting involved with our games. The true extent of Jennifer's commitment to community can be seen in everything she does and through her accomplishments and awards. She was nominated for the San Antonio Business Journal's 40 under Forty for the work she has done to reorganize the governance of the San Antonio Highland Games Association. She was a semifinalist for the WEtv "Women on Their Way" - The Women on Their Way by Wyndham Worldwide Award recognizing her for making a measurable impact both in career and in her charitable efforts. Jennifer balances work, life and community. She was awarded as an Outstanding Volunteer in which Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas leaders presented this award for her work as the Garner Service Unit Director for 5 years. She has received the United States Presidential Call to Service Lifetime Achievement Award - The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation which honors volunteers with more than 4000 hours committed to local non-profit organizations. She has also been recognized as USAA's Volunteer of the Year in 2004, the USAA Federal Savings Bank Volunteer of the Year in 2005 and the USAA Member Experience Volunteer of the Year in 2011 for her significant hours of dedication to local community.

7. Describe how your volunteer has made a difference to the festival or event. What impact has your volunteer had on your festival/event? What void would there be without him or her as a volunteer? (20 points)

Two paragraphs is just not nearly enough space to explain the impact that Jennifer has had for our festival and organization. As president of SAHGA, Jennifer was instrumental in making 2011 the most successful year the organization has ever had. The games brought in a record number of attendants, up 30% from the previous year. Jennifer set up and ran Strategic Planning Conferences to maximize the Association's effectiveness in planning for the 2012 games. Jennifer's efforts have resulted in the largest number of attendees on record in 2011, consideration of the Highland Games as an official San Antonio Fiesta event, and a level of organization that is applauded by board members of SAHGA time after time. She encouraged SAHGA to join IFEA/TFEA and through her tireless efforts has also lead to recognition at from the Texas Association of Events and Festivals. SAHGA was awarded top honors in all three of the categories entered: Best Social Media, Best Website, and Best Multimedia - all enhancements made under Jennifer's direction in 2010 and 2011. Jennifer served as point of contact between other affiliated organizations (Gaelic Athletic

Club, Scottish Society of San Antonio, British Heritage Association, Harps and Shamrock Society, Irish Cultural Society and Association of Scottish Games & Festivals) to facilitate partnerships that were mutually beneficial at various events throughout the year. Jennifer has organized and ran fundraising events for the San Antonio Highland Games. She has expanded sponsorship by sharing the Festival's mission of education and entertainment through networking with local business owners. Jennifer's efforts have increased sponsorship donations by 400%.

Of all the possible nominees for the award, none strikes us as more deserving and qualified than Jennifer May-Dennis. Jennifer is a highly competent and skilled member of our organization. Jennifer is well known for her loyalty, dedication, and hard work, as well as being a tireless promoter of our organization. As mentioned earlier, Jennifer has been instrumental in the success and growth of our organization over the years. Initially, the Games were held in the parking lot of Retama Park Racetrack in Selma, Texas. With the hard work and dedication of volunteers like Jennifer, the crowds outgrew the available space and we moved to our current location at the Helotes Fairgrounds. Each year, Jennifer has outstanding ideas to top each prior year and expand membership, volunteers, and festival guests. As a result of Jennifer's vision for SAHGA, we are looking at long range plans to help us continue to grow and further expand the presence of the Highland Games in our culture rich city. Jennifer is truly irreplaceable. She has great knowledge, skills, and passion that can never be duplicated. In considering the future of the Highland Games, Jennifer has helped organize SAHGA so that our vision encompasses the growing interest of the San Antonio Community in the games. It has been a privilege to have Jennifer as a committed and exemplary volunteer for our organization, and without reservation, we feel that she would be extremely deserving of the IFEA Volunteer of the Year award.