

Nomination for the
**2013 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks
Volunteer of the Year Award**
June 3, 2013

A. Individual Submitting Nomination Information:

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B. Nomination Information:

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

Chris's journey with Music for All (MFA) began in 1990 when he was a freshman at West Virginia University. A member of their acclaimed Marching Band, Chris was required to volunteer at Music for All's Bands of America (BOA) Eastern Regional Marching Band Competition for high school students. He was a parking lot attendant. Despite the lackluster volunteer assignment, this first exposure to MFA made a lasting impression on the young man who grew up outside of Philadelphia, PA. So impressionable, that he continued to volunteer for MFA for the next 23 years. Following his debut as a parking lot attendant, Chris traveled the following summer to Wisconsin to be a camp counselor for BOA's Summer Camp for high school marching band students. By then, he was hooked.

Within those 23 years, Chris experienced nearly every volunteer opportunity available at MFA, from parking buses to being a camp counselor to events management. Chris had a personal goal to experience every facet of the organization. This is no small feat. MFA is a multifaceted organization that: provides music education for middle and high school students in marching bands, concert bands, orchestras, music ensembles or as individuals; offers professional development for instrumental music teachers; organizes a series of regional and national performance events that are culminating experiences for schools and student musicians; and serves as an advocate for scholastic music programs across the country. Collectively, Chris has volunteered at 111 events that spanned 37 different venues across the country in 19 states. He has logged 39,000 miles in personal vehicles to these events, and dedicated more than 7,000 service hours to Music for All. After 23 years of volunteering, working a full-time job, earning a Master Degree, getting married, having children and pursuing a doctorate degree, Chris's dedication to MFA has not waned. While he is not traveling as much for MFA events, he is currently the Committee Chair for updating the 2013 BOA Official Procedure and Adjudication Handbook—an 58-page document that outlines event rules and regulations, eligibility to participate, event logistics, competition format, evaluation criteria and the adjudication system.

2. Show specific examples of your volunteer's roles and responsibilities. (10 points)

Chris's progression from a parking lot attendant in 1990 to the Contest Director for the Grand National Marching Band Championships in 2009 is a result of his commitment to the organization at all levels. During his tenure with MFA, Chris provided logistics support and event management at: 81 BOA Regional Marching Band Championships; 20 Grand National Championships (three-day event), four Summer Symposiums (10-day event); three Music for All National Festivals (5-day event); and one Regional Concert Band Festival, which occurred during his honeymoon. His volunteer assignments at these events have included (but not limited to): event management, field manager, field operations, announcer, parking manager, ticketing, concessions, tabulator, timing and penalties judge, loading dock monitor and shuttle driver. Many of these jobs included manual labor and grunt work, such as loading and unloading instruments and props from buses in chilly fall weather. Moreover, being a "tabulator" at the Grand National Championships encompasses long days, from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., ensuring the accuracy of the Judges' scores.

Eventually, his extraordinary dedication to working on the front-lines at all these events earned him the distinguished role of Contest Director for Grand National Championships three years in a row from 2009 to 2011. This is the highest volunteer position available at MFA. Ultimately, the Contest Director is responsible for delivering an event that is consistent with MFA's mission, vision and core values. A demanding, complex and highly specialized volunteer position, the Contest Director makes the event—held in Indianapolis' Lucas Oil Stadium—an unforgettable experience for 75,000 people, including the students, teachers, band directors and spectators. Specifically the Contest Director:

- Supervises and manages the event, including managing MFA paid staff and event volunteers;
- Serves as the principal contact and final decision maker with venue personnel, first responders, participants, guests and spectators;
- Makes decisions regarding show operations, application of contest rules, event operations and safety considerations;
- Serves as principal ombudsman for the event; and
- Supervises Contest Chief Judge, press box, tabulation of scores, the box office, and overall finances for the event.

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

Chris's expertise in events management has evolved with the organization, and he has more institutional knowledge than many of the paid staff. Chris's hands-on experience is greatly enhanced by his academic and career pursuits. Chris holds a Bachelor of Music from West Virginia University, a Master of Education from California University of Pennsylvania, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Instructional Management and Leadership from Robert Morris University. Since 1999 he has been a Music Teacher and the Band Director at Mars Area Middle School. In addition, Chris is deeply involved with scholastic music programs in his home state, most recently serving on Pennsylvania's Department of Education's Standards and Practices Commission, a position appointed by the governor.

Chris is fascinated by the order, precision, and professionalism of MFA events and most importantly, the benefits to students. His integrity as an administrator and adherence to professional standards complements MFA's core value of creating positively life-changing experiences for everyone

connected with the organization. While many volunteers shy away from new experiences outside their comfort zone, Chris thrives on the challenge. Because Chris started his volunteer career with MFA at such a young age, he was not always successful. He made mistakes. But most importantly, he learned from his mistakes. He took the initiative to learn from staff and let them be his mentors. In the early days, Chris did not receive all the volunteer positions he sought. He worked on the “front line” of many events for a decade before he gained enough trust and expertise to earn more distinguished positions in management.

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

Chris’s leadership style, drive and resilience is the epitome of MFA’s core values and beliefs. He leads by example and does not wait to be asked to complete a task—no matter how menial the task may seem. Chris’s volunteer endeavors also embody MFA’s core value of innovation. MFA operates with an entrepreneurial spirit, values creativity, and celebrates courageous innovation. One such example of courageous innovation, was Chris’s role managing the Awards Ceremony of the Grand National Championships in 2000 for MFA’s 25th Anniversary. All eyes were on Chris, as he decided to re-imagine the Awards Ceremony to include ALL participating marching bands, medallion bearers, and dignitaries in a flare of pageantry that celebrated this monumental occasions in MFA’s history. The stadium was filled with color and pageantry as Chris led a procession of drum majors from all 90 participating bands onto the field to join the 2,500 finalists. Simultaneously, the color guards of each band descended from the stadium aisles, surrounding the audience with flags and color. Chris’s flawless design and execution of the ceremony added a visual representation of MFA’s 25-year impact on marching bands in this country. The audience was amazed and moved by the unprecedented display of scholastic pageantry and camaraderie that is indicative of MFA events.

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

Once Chris became a regular volunteer for MFA, he began working nearly every regional event within reasonable driving distance from Pennsylvania. Early in his career as a teacher, he often worked all week, and spent his weekends traveling with MFA. The only BOA Marching Band Regionals he missed in the early days were those in Los Angeles and Houston—simply because they were too far to drive. If a job needed to be done, Chris would do it. He matched staff time hour for hour. His zealousness and passion to make MFA events truly life-changing for students, often kept him up until 1 or 2 a.m. in the morning finishing tasks, tabulating scores, etc. Chris has never missed a deadline or failed to honor a commitment.

One of his early examples of dependability occurred in 1996, when Eric Martin was new to the organization and led the events management team, which primarily consisted of one other paid staff. A BOA Marching Band Regional was scheduled to be at WVU, Chris’s alma mater, but they lost the venue with short notice. The Regionals were moved to Charleston, SC, a new venue, and Chris was integral in making the transition a success. The volunteer team for this event consisted of about 15 people, and Chris’s level of commitment to ensuring the success of the event stayed with Eric Martin, who recognized his loyalty, talent and passion.

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

Chris considers MFA a part of his family. This deep commitment, coupled with Chris’s positive attitude, is a rare asset to any organization. To Chris, scouting locations for MFA events while on his

honeymoon in Florida was part of life. Driving to various cities for events after Friday night football games was commonplace for Chris. He did not complain about catching a flight at 1 a.m. on a Saturday to work an event in Las Vegas the same day. To Chris, this is an adventure, a dream come true, a chance to travel the country doing what he loves—supporting and recognizing students for their outstanding accomplishments in music. Chris is inspired by MFA’s mission to create, provide and expand positively life-changing experience through music for all. For Chris, MFA did change his life. He wore his BOA tuxedo at his wedding. He first met the Band Director for Mars High School (the school district where he currently works) while parking his car at a Regional event in Toledo, OH. Most importantly, Chris leads through positive action and tirelessly serves MFA for the greater good.

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)

Chris’s impact extends far beyond a single event or series of events. Chris has been the bridge to MFA’s future. He began volunteering when MFA had a staff of nine, and now that staff has doubled. In many cases, he has helped train and orient new staff for MFA events. His institutional knowledge is unmatched. Chris believed in the organization from the beginning. When it was a fledging organization striving to evolve and professionalize scholastic marching band events—Chris believed in the mission. When Bands of America and Music for All Foundation merged in 2006 resulting in many organizational pains—Chris believed in the mission. When MFA faced devastating budget cuts in 2009 exacerbated by the recession, staff morale was low and MFA considered closing its doors forever—Chris believed in the mission. Simply put, Chris was at his best, when the organization was not at its best. He has been an energizing force throughout MFA’s evolution.

Today, MFA is stronger and more stable than it has ever been. Chris’s 7,000 hours of volunteer time has not gone unnoticed. Adjusting for inflation, Chris’s volunteer time over 23 years is valued at \$102,830. This is extraordinary, and this is why Music for All is nominating Chris Protho for the 2013 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year Award.