

**A. Individual Submitting Nomination Information:**

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Kentucky Derby Festival  
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**B. Nomination Information:**

George Troutman  
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**C. Nomination Questions:**

**1) Explain your volunteer’s significant depth of involvement.**

Dependable, dedicated and trustworthy are just a few words used to describe George Troutman. George has given more than 40 years of service to the Kentucky Derby Festival and was instrumental in getting one of our premiere events, the U.S. Bank Great BalloonFest, off the ground many years ago. As a result of his passion for ballooning and the Festival, George has become an integral part of the balloon events’ operations and works with staff to continually insure its success. Both staff members and fellow volunteers know George is a tremendous asset and serves as the “go to” person for everything balloon related.

With a series of five balloon events that are attended by more than 200,000 annually, George knows all the intricacies of the races, crew challenge, balloon glimmer and balloon glow. From developing new components of these events to making safety a top priority, much of the success of our BalloonFest is attributed to Georges’ hard work and dedication. There is nobody more deserving of the IFEA Haas Wilkerson Volunteer of the Year Award!

**2) Show specific examples of your volunteer’s roles and responsibilities.**

With more than 4,000 volunteers, there are very few with an official title. However, George Troutman is one of the few - he serves as “Balloon Meister” for the five individual events making up the U.S. Bank Great BalloonFest. With this role comes tremendous responsibility and there is no individual with the knowledge and expertise George has gleaned over the past 40 years. As Balloon Meister, it is George’s first priority to insure the safety of the spectators, balloonists and balloons at the events. He also acts as the liaison with all flight-related governmental agencies and relays information on the safety concerns due to weather. With the support of other professionals, it is ultimately the Balloon Meister who gives final approval for an event to start, be delayed or cancelled all together.

In addition to serving on the balloon committees, George also supports the Kentucky Derby Festival's Pegasus Pin Program, specifically the annual Grand Prize drawings. Each week, for nine consecutive weeks, George is the witness to the drawing, which is managed by our advertising agency. George goes to the agency and oversees the drawing to lend legitimacy to the drawing and he holds the winner's information for an official television announcement that happens each week. As a CPA by trade, and during his busiest time of year, George still finds time to support the Festival in these areas. We are truly fortunate to have someone so dedicated.

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

Even after four decades of involvement, the level of enthusiasm George brings to the Festival is contagious. Whenever you see him, he seems very serious and is always watching to make sure everything is going smoothly at events. But one of the things George enjoys the most about volunteering is seeing the smiles on children's faces. There is something very nostalgic about ballooning and our events offer the opportunity for people to get up close and personal with the balloons and their crews. This is by design, largely because of George wanting to create an unforgettable experience for everyone.

George has an aviation background and once he attended the 2nd balloon race in 1974, he decided to purchase a balloon and then he began flying in the race. Some 40 years later, we now have five individual events that comprise the Great BalloonFest. The knowledge George has of aviation allows him to coordinate all flight activities, direct safety officials and make decisions about flying. In addition, he coordinates all pilot documentation and holds briefings in advance of all balloon events as well as manages the scoring to determine the winner of the various events.

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

When the Great Balloon Race began some 40 years ago, it was a single event that took place in a Louisville park. Today, the Great Balloon Race is one of five events that make up the Great BalloonFest. The growth was generated from George's dedication to the sport, the Festival and to the Louisville community. In addition to the race, there is a Balloon Glow that takes place during Festival. This event draws more than 60,000 spectators annually – and was born from the pilots looking for something else to do. One evening when the pilots were in town for the race, George got a group of pilots together and they inflated their balloons and had an “unofficial glow” at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center. It caused traffic jams and the Festival knew it had something!

If you have spent any time with balloon crews, you know they can be a very competitive group of individuals. Most recently, when we were looking for ways to increase attendance and think outside the box about balloon events, the idea of a crew challenge came up – pitting the balloon crews against one another for bragging rights seemed an appropriate way to once again add a new element to BalloonFest. George whole heartedly supported the idea, helped develop the criteria and challenges and today, we have an event that draws hundreds of balloon fans and their families.

**5) Tell how your volunteer has exemplified his or her dependability.**

Often times, volunteering means you hold very unusual hours. This couldn't be truer than when you are involved with balloons. Two of the balloon events have very early launch times – 7:00 AM, so the day begins at 3:00 AM with weather updates, pilot briefings and passenger briefings. For the

duration of BalloonFest, George is always a visible and available. He is continually gathering information to make the call on whether or not it is safe to fly or inflate a balloon for an event. Year after year, George gladly fills this role and is always happy to work with other volunteers and staff to help them understand what is happening. There are no volunteers more dependable than George.

**6) Describe your volunteer's positive attitude.**

Weather conditions have a tremendous impact on BalloonFest and even the slightest amount of change in wind conditions or threat of rain can postpone an event. George is a very optimistic person and there is nobody who wants these events to happen more than he does. His attitude, even when events are delayed is great, he stays upbeat and is already looking forward to the next event. Even if he is, George will not let anyone see his disappointment over something not going according to plan. He remains focused and a source of positive energy for the staff and other volunteers who are supporting him.

**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?**

Each day he volunteers, George makes a difference to the Kentucky Derby Festival and to the events and committees he serves. Over the years, he has not only been instrumental in the growth of ballooning events in our community, but he also has supported efforts to lend legitimacy to the Pegasus Pin Program; one of the primary revenue streams for the Festival.

The greatest impact George has had on Festival is that he bears a tremendous amount of professional expertise and business acumen, but also has aviation knowledge needed for key events. He uses the knowledge to make decisions and also helps others understand why a particular decision was made. George says one of the reasons he got involved with Festival was because he saw with his background, he could bring something to the event that would make it one of the best hot air events in the country, and he has done exactly what he set out to do.

George has been involved with Festival for so many years that it is hard to imagine what events would be like without him. In his role as Balloon Meister, he brings knowledge that is crucial to the operation of the event, but he also brings passion in seeing a job well done. The combination of those two characteristics is what drives him to continue and to make it bigger and better each year.

**D. Media List**

If the Kentucky Derby Festival's nominee is chosen, our Communications Team would like to work with IFEA to coordinate the release of the announcement.

The Courier-Journal newspaper  
525 West Broadway  
Louisville, KY 40202  
(502) 582-4011  
sshaffer@courier-journal.com

Business First newspaper  
501 South Fourth Street

Louisville, KY 40202  
(502) 583-1731  
cgstemle@bizjournals.com

The Voice-Tribune newspaper  
130 St. Matthews Avenue  
Louisville, KY 40207  
(502) 897-8900  
igor@voice-tribune.com