

## IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year Nomination

### A. Individual Submitting Nomination Information:

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### B. Nomination Information

**Marinus Rouw**  
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### C. Nomination Questions

#### 1. Volunteer's Significant Depth of Involvement.

Marinus has been involved with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival since its inception, at the brainstorming session in 1983 when the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival was born. In the early years we wanted to have a parade and fireworks as part of the festival, but needed a sponsor. Marinus stepped forward, organizing the local Farmers Insurance agents in our area, including getting the corporate Farmer's marketing people on board. He was instrumental in planning the parade and helping get Farmer's agents and staffers at the parade to help with line-up and organization -- once he retired, the Farmer's Insurance sponsorship stopped -- the driving force behind it disappeared.

Marinus didn't disappear, however. He decided the festival was good for Skagit Valley and he wanted to stay involved -- he developed a distribution system for our festival brochures in the valley (about 125,000) and delivered those brochures (he has done this for over 10 years). Marinus decided that we needed more of a voice for our volunteers on our festival board of directors, so he became a board member, then went on to be president (in 2010). After his term as president ended, he decided that he still wanted a role on the board -- as an advisor and advocate for volunteerism -- so he worked to get an advisory position instituted for the board and remains in that position today.

#### 2. Examples of Volunteer's Roles and Responsibilities

We use volunteers to give information to visitors and to run specific events -- Marinus does both on a grand scale. People come into the festival office for information and pretty soon Marinus is selling them a commemorative poster, designing a tour for a two-day stay, and talking about the best field to visit for a particular photo shoot. Sometimes visitors arrive thinking there are guided tours available -- Marinus makes sure these people are taken care of -- either by

arranging for a taxi or finding the bus route that will take them close to the tulip fields (about two miles away). He's been known to take visitors himself when all else fails!

When Marinus takes on volunteering at one of our events, he is an over-achiever. At our gala celebration, he decided to upgrade the silent auction, tripling the number of items for the evening. For the 2010 World Tulip Summit we hosted during the year he was president – he wasn't content to be a dignitary – he hopped on the bus transporting the delegates and became their tour guide for all three days of the summit. As parade chair, he went out in the valley and recruited entries – lawn mower drill teams, 4-H groups, and farmers.

### 3. Volunteer's significant enthusiasm, organizational assistance and specific expertise.

If you ask Marinus to do a job – whether it's to evaluate a bid proposal, proof a brochure, help with insurance questions or advocate for the festival – he does it exceeding all expectations. He always asks: why? how come? or have you thought of this? He talks to groups, politicians, and sponsors explaining what the festival goals are and operational considerations. When he looks at a brochure proof, for instance, he actually READS all the words and pages AND makes sure everything matches. He finds corrections missed by everyone else. The same holds true for our website – if he says he's done something, it is done completely.

Each year Marinus talks to us about sponsors and which businesses in our area are sponsors and, if not, wants to know why. Then, on his own initiative, he goes and talks to the business owner. One person was his dentist – he went in for a crown and came out with the crown and a sponsorship for the festival. Another was a gas station in our area that went through several thousand brochures, but refused to sponsor the festival. Marinus decided that needed to change, so he talked to the owner, guaranteed he would deliver as many brochures as they needed, and got them to sign up as a sponsor. Later on this same sponsor was slow in paying – Marinus asked about them, said I'll be back, and came back in the next day with a check!

### 4. Volunteer's Initiative and Leadership

As President of our Board of Directors in 2010, Marinus decided to open each meeting with a fun tulip-related trivia item. He also insisted that each member of our board be active as a volunteer on event committees and as an information station volunteer. He followed up, asking if board members showed up – if they didn't he would call them and find out why. In addition, he held board members accountable for attendance at meetings. If a member missed a meeting, he called, asked why, and said he expected to see them at the next meeting. One board member in particular did not make several meetings and Marinus took the initiative and asked that member to resign if they couldn't make meetings.

The hundreds of acres of tulips that bloom in our valley are here for only a short period of time. Every evening Marinus takes it upon himself to drive around the tulip fields so we know the status of the fields and gardens for the next day. In addition, he takes the time to talk with the owners of the gardens about how things are going and how crowds have been for the day. He

decides what the festival needs and goes about making it happen. For instance, we felt we needed tulips at our downtown office (no dirt, no flower beds) during the spring. He plants the tulip bulbs in pots each fall and rotates fresh flowers throughout April so the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival greets visitors with tulips.

#### 5. Volunteer's Dependability

When Marinus says he will do something, it is done, period. Every year the festival distributes loaned cones and barricades to landowners who need help to keep driveways and yards clear during the month-long festival run. We asked Marinus to help distribute them – in year one, he was at the distribution site and then decided some people he knew that needed the supplies weren't there, so he brought them cones and barricades. In year two of this job, he not only manned the distribution, but arranged for the county to come and pick up the barricades and cones from a central location. By year three, he told festival staff what day he would do the distribution and pick up (and said, really, there is no need for you to come).

Marinus always finds things that we didn't even know we needed – bringing in a table from home for volunteers to use to put together mailings. He decided the festival needed to have a heated storage unit for its "gear," but knew it wasn't in the budget – so he took matters into his own hands and negotiated a deal with a new storage facility. He is trustworthy and dependable – he now has a key to the office, after it became apparent it was a lot easier to give him one than constantly meeting him at the office for one task or another.

#### 6. Volunteer's Positive Attitude

Marinus giggles – life is a fun adventure and the festival is something he gets to be involved with each year. He enjoys the comedy of helping the public – and works to help others find the fun in working with the public. He insists on participating in the annual volunteer training, acting as tour director for our volunteers, showing them directions and locations of various festival events and activities. He gladly shows others his famous "right-hand turn only" tour of the tulip field area and encourages volunteers to mention the various festival events and activities, including the Kiwanis salmon barbecue, the art shows, the street fair, etc. Visitors often walk away after talking to Marinus finding two days worth of activities to do in the valley.

Promoting the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival is something Marinus does wherever he goes. He travels extensively and comes back telling us who he met at a visitor center and with new ideas for the festival. During one trip to Hawaii, he was hopeful he could meet President Obama (who was vacationing just down the beach) and tell him about the festival. Instead, Marinus talked to the Secret Service team. When visitors arrive from his native country, Holland, Marinus can be found breaking into Dutch and then translating for the rest of us. He even brings in papers from his home town, written in Dutch, on occasion showing us references to the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in articles. When a visiting TV crew from British Columbia stopped by unexpectedly, Marinus recorded a welcome in Dutch for our Canadian/Dutch fans!

## 7. Impact volunteer has on Festival

Marinus is one of those people who has always been there, ready, willing and able to help with just about anything. He is now in his late 70s and we find ourselves needing to plan to find assistants for Marinus so the things he does can be learned and continued. So far, to fill his brochure distribution, the barricade and cone job, and the parade chair role, we need three different people. His work during the festival helping volunteers is priceless – usually he volunteers over 150 hours during the month-long festival. Filling that hole will be enormous.

The even bigger impact he brings is a lifetime of knowledge (he immigrated to Skagit County when he was 12) of our area and the willingness to share that knowledge and his contacts with the festival. He is the voice of logic and reason on our board, constantly working to encourage and mentor others on how to make the festival a bigger success. He is the “go-to” volunteer for the festival – without him, running the festival and the day-to-day business operations would be much more difficult and certainly less fun. Our current board president Kristin Garcia noted, “Marinus continues to inspire and encourage the board and reminds us of our role and the importance of our involvement – that what we do not only impacts Festival operations, but the Valley as a whole.”