



**Marinus Rouw**  
**2015 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year**  
**Nominated by the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival**  
**Mount Vernon, WA**

**The IFEA and Zambelli Fireworks are pleased to announce Marinus Rouw from the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in Mount Vernon, WA as the recipient of the 2015 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year Award.**

Marinus' joined the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in 1983, before there was even a festival! He was part of the initial group of local leaders who thought there needed to be a festival to celebrate spring. Initially organizing a brief three-day event, after two years the founding members decided that wasn't big enough and moved the festival to a 10-day event. Looking for ways to improve the festival, Marinus was instrumental in organizing a parade, gathering local Farmers Insurance agents to help sponsor. He continues to Chair the Parade Committee (now nearing its 20-year anniversary), having moved it from the small bulb grower venue in its early days to its current location in downtown La Conner, WA.



Marinus retired from Farmers Insurance in 2001, but he didn't retire from the festival. In fact, he became more active. He not only developed a distribution system for our festival brochures in the valley (about 125,000), ensuring that each sponsor and each event (225 sponsors, 40+ events and activities) would have their brochures delivered to them, but he also decided that volunteers needed more of a voice on our festival Board of Directors, so he became a Board Member, going on to be President in 2010.

During his Presidency, Marinus recruited his wife to help Chair and organize the World Tulip Summit in Skagit Valley, bringing in Tulip Festival people and growers from around the world. Of course Marinus wasn't content to be a dignitary during the event, he could be found on the bus transporting the delegates as their tour guide for all three days of the summit.

After his term as President ended, Marinus volunteered for a new position on the board, Advisor, and remains in that position today.

When Marinus takes on volunteering at one of our events, he is an over-achiever. He goes all out helping people who are seeking information. Marinus starts talking to a group and pretty soon he 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.

Marinus is passionate about the festival, tulips, and gardening. 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. He takes the time to talk with the owners of the gardens about how things are going and how the crowds have been for the day. He then reports in to us, alleviating the need to send staff members out to do the same.

As a downtown office, we do not have flowerbeds in front of our headquarters so we make do with potted flowers (after all, a flower festival should have flowers, especially tulips when they are blooming). Marinus coordinates with the tulip growers to get bulbs donated, potted and ready to be displayed, rotating the pots to keep the front of the office looking good the entire month of April.

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 and for the festival.

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 and gladly showing them his famous “right-hand turn only” tour of the tulip field area.

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 and gave them festival souvenirs. When visitors arrive from his native country, Holland, Marinus can be found speaking 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!

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 some of his major roles, we need three different people. His work during the festival helping volunteers is priceless. Filling that hole will be enormous.

The even bigger impact he brings is a lifetime of knowledge of our area (he immigrated to Skagit County when he was 12) 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. Former 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.”*

Please help us welcome and congratulate our 2015 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks Volunteer of the Year Award Winner, Marinus Rouw.