



2019 IFEA Volunteer of the Year
LuAnn Chapman Gatts
Nominated by the Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau
Grapevine, TX, USA

LuAnn Chapman Gatts has been an outstanding volunteer for both of Grapevine's annual festivals for many years. Her expertise, relationship with vendors, and willingness to give countless hours every year make her a vital part of the success of both Main Street Fest and GrapeFest.

LuAnn oversees load-in of vendors at both festivals; manages the food vendors; is co-supervisor for admission gates; and part of the leadership team of People's Choice Wine Tasting Classic. She does all of this with enthusiasm, positive attitude and energy. She gives 14+ hours every day of the festival and countless hours before and after to ensure the success of the festival.



LuAnn's involvement began in 2001 at Main Street Days where she volunteered for the Heritage Ambucs, a local service group, as a gate attendant. During load-out, she was able to help get vendors off the street efficiently and kept the normal chaos under control. She was awarded the Joey Kramer Volunteer award and invited to be on the steering committee for 2001 GrapeFest.

After becoming the Food Vendor chair in 2002, LuAnn realized that vendor check-out needed to be overhauled. She invited the vendors to bring left over food to share to give the time waiting at check out more of a party feeling. She is able to ensure that the vendor not only receives their pay-out but leaves satisfied and ready to sign-up for the next festival all while making the time go much quicker.

In the early days of Grapevine's festivals, the emergency management team consisted of the Director of Festivals and Events, the Fire Marshall, and a police lieutenant. LuAnn quickly became part of this team. She could diffuse many problems with a smile, a joke or her famous tag line "Hey, I'm just a volunteer".

When LuAnn learned that Gayle Hall, Grapevine's Director of Festivals and Events, needed help from someone with computer skills, they would work together on many of the operational and logistical festival requirements, including developing the festival plan of work and inputting all needs/requirements into Excel so that the set-up team could do a more efficient job during the load-in process.

As Vendor chair, LuAnn noticed that there was no information on where artisans were located. She put together a directory of vendors both by location and category. She also designed the pocket size volunteer handbook that is still updated each festival.

In 2007, LuAnn became part of the GrapeFest People's Choice Wine Tasting Classic leadership team. Her initial job was to move from hand vote counting to scanned electronic ballots. This helped on the integrity side as well as time involved. She helped produce the wine reference guide, participates in the wine ordering and developed the signage for the wineries. She "recruited" her two high school aged sons to assist with the heavy lifting in between sessions. After they graduated, she worked with local schools to fill this assignment. With the rest of the People's Choice leadership, LuAnn has helped grow the event to 11 sessions and over 7,500 attendees.

LuAnn is the go-to person for new events. She chaired the Professionals Only Wine Tasting when the CVB was working to add more Texas wines in Dallas/Fort Worth area restaurants. Her enthusiasm and willingness to do whatever is necessary was also evident when the new Culinary area was added at GrapeFest in 2004. Though she is notorious for not cooking, she can be quite the foodie, so she was willing to chair this event and develop it as a new venue.

LuAnn has participated in festival exchanges with the National Cherry Festival and Heritage Harbor Days. When other festivals visit Grapevine, she helps with tours of the festival. She serves on the Vendor Selection Committee for both festivals and is part of the team that collects tickets at the end of each evening. LuAnn also assists the Marketing team to provide information on wines and wineries for the People's Choice Wine Tasting Classic, despite having all the operational needs of the event happening simultaneously.

Festival Set-up has been streamlined by her addition of booth location signs in the window of the vendor vehicle. Her helping train vendors on the most effective ways to tear-down at the end of the festival has made the process more efficient.

In addition to her other festival responsibilities, she was made the Admission Gates co-chair in 2013. The gates are staffed by local school and civic groups and her team does all the training to these groups. LuAnn also recruits hard working volunteers into management roles for future festivals.

To LuAnn, it is much more than just being onsite open to close for the festivals. She also volunteers for other city-sponsored events in Grapevine. She has taught knitting at Nash Farm; works set-up and wrangles the judges for Butterfly Flutterby; helps set-up on the Blessing of the Vines and has worked operations on the Grapevine Wine Trail.

LuAnn prepared the winning application for Grapevine when we won the IFEA World Festival and Event City award and has helped with many Pinnacle award entries.

As Chairperson of the 2010 GrapeFest, her motto was to have fun while you do great work. Her top 10 lists kept meetings moving and she was great at mixing volunteering and leadership.

In 2017, LuAnn was diagnosed with breast cancer just before Main Street Fest. Fortunate not to have chemo or radiation, she delayed reconstruction surgery to allow for her to work her usual 14-hour days at GrapeFest.

As a leader, LuAnn trusts her volunteers to accomplish their tasks while she problem solves any unusual situation. Customer service is her credo, and she can always be found with her two-way radio on, taking off to help another volunteer or staff member with any number of interesting tasks, many of which are unrelated to her actual assignment.

Her involvement does not end with festivals and events in Grapevine. She is very active in other areas throughout the community. LuAnn has been on the Grapevine Heritage Foundation and PTA Board of Directors, is on the board of FOGSAC and Heritage AMBUCS, a current member of the Heritage Foundation, Grapevine Historical Society and is a charter member helping the form the Craft Brew Guild of Grapevine. This year she chaired the silent auction for the GCISD Education Foundation and operations for the AMBUC's charity bike ride.

Her enthusiasm, willingness to do whatever is necessary, love of her community, energy, positive attitude, vision, leadership and initiative are all reasons while LuAnn Chapman Gatts is IFEA's Volunteer of the Year.

Please help us congratulate our 2019 IFEA Volunteer of the Year Award Winner, LuAnn Chapman Gatts.