



**Pete Van de Putte, CFEE
2011 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee
dfest®/Dixie Flag Event Services Team**



IFEA's 2011 Hall of Fame inductee is a natural-born networker.

Pete Van de Putte, CFEE, started in the festival business as a young child selling pennants with his father to shrimp boat captains for the 'Blessing of the Fleet' festivals along the Texas coastline. His first official job, at the age of 8, was to help put up the décor for the Poteet Strawberry Festival, one of Dixie Decorators first customers when they opened. Even at this young age, Pete began interacting with festival and fair managers as he walked the grounds with his father. Relationships built quickly, especially when the Festival and Fair managers would provide Pete with tickets to the carnival! Those relationships have continued to grow for more than 50 years.

Through Pete's school years, he worked installing Christmas decorations, decorated rodeo arenas and festivals, and as he got older and could drive, he started making personal visits to the venues to see how best to decorate them. According to Pete, his greatest challenge was learning "how to make things different using all the same décor."

In a tradition many have tried to model after him, Pete would not only willingly teach others, but would also make it a point to learn from them, too. As a young apprentice, Pete would constantly watch his father as he created and designed flags and banners of every imaginable kind, until soon he began to define innovative and creative ideas of his own. Pete learned from his parents that if he had a dream, and was willing to work with dedication toward that dream, he could make it a reality.

Pete's dream growing up however, was to become a high school band director. He attended St. Mary's University where he majored in music education, while at the same time working nights at Dixie doing silk screening, hanging net banners and on the weekends decorating festivals in the San Antonio area. Pete's career as a band director allowed him to develop and shape his creativity while - perhaps more importantly - helping to develop and shape many young people into great adults. Not a day goes by that he doesn't hear from a former student whose life he has touched.

At the age of 30 Pete's passion for working with people led him, with encouragement from his father, to make the best career decision of his life: to come into Dixie Flag Manufacturing Company and run the business. His father said he could pay him what he was making as a band director, and if he wanted more, the answer was short and sweet... "build the business."

When Pete took over the company, he expanded the core business of selling all kinds of flags to all kinds of customers, and concentrated on aggressively building the custom manufacturing aspect of the business. This naturally led him to return to his festival and fair roots. More recently, by incorporating the next generation into the family business, he has expanded the event services focus of the company to include mascots and video production for festivals, and the introduction a new industry brand: *dfest*[™] - *Dixie Flag Event Services Team*. Throughout the years, Pete has practically raised his family within the context of Dixie Flag, having had his sister, several daughters, one of his sons and one of his sons-in-laws representing the company.

Pete's decision to come into the company was also based upon his positive feelings towards the festival and fair acquaintances he had made and a desire to expand those relationships. Almost immediately he became involved as a charter member and the first vendor business member of the Texas Festival Association (now the Texas Festivals & Events Association - TFEA). In 1982, he was elected to the TFEA board where he would represent suppliers for many years, in addition to serving as Chairman of the Board in 1998. Dixie Flag, through *dfest*[™] continues to be a Chapter Sponsor for TFEA.

In 1988, Jo Ann Andera, Director of the Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio, suggested that Pete join the IFEA. He took that advice and attended his first IFEA Convention in 1989 in Palm Springs, California. From Pete's first involvement in both TFEA and IFEA, he began attending educational sessions at event management workshops and conventions, quickly developing an appreciation for the people in the festivals and events industry and the power of celebration. It became his passion to help support those who were creating celebration. Pete's strong belief in education helped him 'pay it forward' to others in the industry by sponsoring speakers such Pat Craig Corda, "K" Alferio, and Ira Rosen for TFEA's first conferences. Pete is now honored to have an IFEA Foundation Legacy Scholarship in his name, providing others with the same opportunities he has had. It was at his first convention in Palm Springs, California in 1989 however, that Pete asked to sponsor the IFEA's Hospitality Suite. He has continued to do so, along with Dixie Flag, for the past 23 years, building a highly valued and anticipated icon of IFEA conventions.

No one understands the importance of networking more than Pete Van de Putte. The outstanding contribution that Pete has made to the IFEA has led to the development of the organization as one that is unique in the Festivals and Events industry, worldwide. The openness of IFEA industry professionals, all willing to unselfishly share their knowledge, experience and resources is one of the many unique traits that sets the IFEA apart from so many others. Without Pete and the *dfest*[™] Hospitality Suite, this spirit could not have grown as quickly as it has. Pete has always understood that an organization or industry that communicates and shares openly with one another will prosper and he has done his part to foster that; locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

In addition to his generous support sponsoring the *dfest*[™] Hospitality Suite, Pete has been actively involved at every level of the IFEA: serving on the IFEA World Board for more than a decade, including as Chairman in 2008; on the IFEA Foundation Board; on the IFEA President's Council; on the IFEA Global Roundtable Council; and as a leading and consistent sponsor of the IFEA for decades. It is fair to say that Pete Van de Putte has helped to guide the organization through challenge, change and opportunity, but always towards a bright future.

However, anyone who thinks that hospitality and conversation are Pete's only contributions are missing the big picture. He has had much to do with changing the way that we look at our events – both figuratively and literally! Pete, Dixie and *dfest*[™] have all contributed tremendously to the way we (and others) experience our events. Their work sets the backdrop for our work as we create memories for so many others. From concept to creation, Pete Van de Putte and company have expanded the concept of flags and banners to every component of an event, including entryways, area décor and delineation, attendee service identification, sponsor recognition, operational signage, grounds ambiance and more. They have taken the “art” of decorations to new levels...and sizes...with their construction of the largest free-flying American flag in the world for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to fly over the George Washington Bridge in New York City!

But perhaps the most important qualities that make Pete Van de Putte a standout among his peers are the ones most readily recognized by those who know him best: His ready cadre of jokes to bring a smile to all those around him; his passion for life, family and friends; his willingness to stand up for what is right; and his loyalty even when times are tough. Through these qualities and many others he has not only raised the bar, but decorated it as well! It is hard to imagine the IFEA or our industry without the magic that is Pete Van de Putte.

Please raise a flag and a toast to our 2011 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee...Pete Van de Putte.