



Colm Croffy
2003 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee
Association of Irish Festivals & Events



Colm Croffy, Chairman of the Association of Irish Festivals & Events (AOIFE), has transcended the mission of festivals and events to build community to having them help create peace.

During his time with the Republic of Ireland's Mary From Dungloe Festival, Croffy became instrumental in linking the festival with a committee from the Ballyclare Festival in Northern Ireland as part of the program for peace and reconciliation in this country. When he became Executive of the AOIFE, he expanded this highly successful linkage concept to cover all festivals in Northern Ireland with the border counties of the Republic of Ireland. His commitment to this important goal has resulted in festivals being used as a medium for building lasting peace.

Under Croffy's leadership, the AOIFE has grown to more than 360 festivals. He has helped the festival sector and with it the people of Ireland through the Community Festivals Networking Programme. The program, devised by Croffy in conjunction with the charity Hospitality Ireland, is aimed at using tourism as a global industry to promote peace and understanding between the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Among other things, the program allowed festival organizers to visit a sister festival in the other country to see how it was operated. The response to this reciprocal arrangement has been amazing. People who wouldn't have otherwise traveled across the border between the countries found new friends. One Republic of Ireland participant remarked, "It was an eye-opener. We realized how much more tolerant people are in Northern Ireland than we would have thought beforehand. We were going to meet a committee. But after a while, we were meeting friends."