



## International Festivals & Events Association

### **Joe Vera, CFEE 2005 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee Borderfest**



Joe Vera grew up in the special events industry. His dad was a dance/concert promoter and hosted a radio talk show every Sunday for some 30 years. From a 29 hour New Years Eve Dance Marathon to onion clipping contests, to The Harry James and Glenn Miller orchestras, to weekly Tejano music dances, he promoted them all... Joe says "I learned from the best." Dad always wanted me to make a career out of the special events industry and I guess I have, if only once a year.

In 1980, when Joe came to Hidalgo, he never dreamed that this community, the Hidalgo Chamber and Borderfest, would become his life's work. Twenty five years later he says that it has been a life that dreams are made of. He believes that the Lord has blessed him by giving him a great community to work in, full of outstanding citizens, leaders and volunteers that are supportive, committed, and share his passion.

In 1980, Hidalgo was a small international crossing with a population of 2,200 residents on the US-Mexico Border. Joe's vision was to develop a sense of community, of pride and to give people a reason to stop in Hidalgo. The city had a small community event called Fiesta Fronteriza (Border Fiesta) that was struggling and drew about 300-400 people. Through organization, hard work and dedication it has been transformed into "Borderfest", now the largest and oldest heritage and music festival in South Texas. The festival has over 1,000 volunteers and an attendance of over 55,000.

Borderfest has been the catalyst for many successes in Hidalgo such as the Worlds Largest Killer Bee, the Festival of Lights, Ramon Ayala Christmas Posada, the Hidalgo Pump House Discovery and Heritage Center, The Dodge Arena, The All America City Designation, The World Birding Center and the Hidalgo Hike and Bike Trail.

Joe's passion for education and giving back to others is evident in all that he does. He states that he owes his success to the ability to fine tune and further his special event skills through programs and benefits offered by IFEA and other professional organizations. It is his belief that there is no other or better educational opportunity for the special events industry in the world, than the IFEA. He takes what he learns, gleans from everyone and shares it back twofold. He walks the walk and talks the talk by making sure that educational opportunities are available for everyone that wants to take advantage of them.

Joe believes that festivals are a celebration of our lives and our community. He lives by the following and hopes that others will to: don't be afraid to dream; don't ever believe you are too small to do anything; and don't ever quit learning -- nothing new in, nothing new out.