

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



The Birth of an IFEA World Festival & Event City



Since we created it, only two short years ago, the *IFEA World Festival & Event City Award*, Sponsored by VISA, has been an undeniable success in accomplishing the goals that we set for ourselves when we imagined it to begin with. At a time when global economies were suffering; when tendencies were to 'hunker down' and protect our own turf, sometimes sacrificing important programs and asset ballast in an effort to maintain some sense of stability within our organizations and cities; the IFEA hoped to build a model that would allow us to:

Recognize and place a well-deserved spotlight on those cities and events that were successfully thriving by working together;

Create and expand conversations between all of the community elements that must work together to maximize the power of events for both residents and visitors, in cities around the world;

Share ideas learned from successful city/event relationships;

Build a repository of information that can be used professionally and academically to create new legacies in the future; and

Inspire others to emulate and build upon those successful models.

In our first two years, we have successfully recognized many amazing IFEA World Festival & Event Cities; of all sizes; from every global region (you can view more information about our selected cities on-line at www.ifea.com).

We have heard from many of those involved in putting together their city applications that not only did we succeed in creating and expanding conversations, but we helped to build new bridges between local organizations; new coop-

eratives; new partnerships. In fact, more than one city has told us that applying for the IFEA World Festival & Event City Award is one of the most valuable exercises that their cities have been through.

We have taken many of the ideas that we have learned from the applicant cities - from shared volunteer programs to city-provided training programs; one-stop shopping for event permitting and city service needs to shared marketing campaigns; and many more, and shared them in presentations to industry gatherings around the world.

And, while we are still collecting sufficient data and information to do comparative research in the years ahead, The International Centre for the Study of Planned Events at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, Scotland has added the IFEA World Festival & Event City program to their student study programs and research focuses.

The one goal that we set for the new program that is a little harder to identify easily, is the hope that our efforts and those of our award recipients to-date, will encourage others to emulate that same success; but I am excited to report that I may have recently been a personal witness to the genesis of a future IFEA World Festival & Event City.

I was pleased to travel to Tucson, Arizona for the first-ever Festivals & Events Association of Tucson and Southern Arizona (FEATS AZ) Conference. I lived in Tucson for many years early in my career when I was the Director of Special Events for Up with People, the international, educational, musical group, so it was a welcome visit to old stomping grounds.

Over the years, Tucson and Southern Arizona have enjoyed a plethora of

creative and quality events, but unintentionally, and in better economic times, they have all been operating more independently of each other than collaboratively. Like many markets around the world today, a variety of new community challenges in recent years raised the need for some expanded conversations. As those conversations grew, coincidentally, or perhaps as the result of similar challenges, the city also went through a number of key leadership changes (Mayor, CVB Director, Chamber, etc.), who were beginning their own new conversations.

When a group of energetic visionaries recognized the opportunities amidst the challenges, they provided the spark whose time had come. Some were long-standing IFEA members; several were familiar with our new IFEA World Festival & Event City Award; and all were anxious to take their city to the next level. That spark ignited what stood out to all those participating in the FEATS AZ conference as a new genesis for Tucson and Southern Arizona. City officials and events and vendors filled the hallways and session rooms from start to finish. Ideas, conversations and information flowed freely. Vendors attended sessions (to learn what their clients were dealing with); events visited with vendors (to hear what was new and seriously consider how they might work together); and city officials became people vs. perceptual hurdles.

At lunch, the new first-term Mayor of Tucson spoke in support of this young coalition of events and event leaders; offered his and the city's partnership; and never once looked at his watch or publically reminded his audience that he couldn't stay long (as many politi-

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cians tend to do). He happily took questions about local event-related issues and when asked about the possibility of Tucson applying for the IFEA World Festival & Event City Award, without a pause, he replied, "If that's what we all want to set as our goal, let's do it; but if we are going to do it, let's be the best. We'll learn along the way and if we don't get it the first time, we'll keep working until we do."

With that attitude and leadership, I see very little that will not be possible moving forward for the City and Events of Tucson and Southern Arizona. With similar commitment and collaboration every city, town or village – large and small – around the world can launch their own genesis of future successes. And while I was excited to find an example of a city that was inspired to emulate the successes of our previous IFEA World Festival & Event Cities, I realized that I had also found a city that is already inspirational in their own right for their mutual commitment to the success of their community.

Note: The deadline for entries into the 2012 IFEA World Festival & Event City Awards is July 30th, 2012. Information and applications can be found on-line at www.ifea.com under Industry Awards.