

# THE BOARD TABLE



## So Many Hats To Wear

In January I was fortunate to be part of an IFEA team that conducted a weeklong Event Management School, followed by an IFEA World Board meeting at Ogelbay Resort in Wheeling, West Virginia. IFEA has created a new two-year interdisciplinary program with the National Recreation and Parks Association (US) which is designed to bring the latest trends and best practices to industry professionals in a concentrated, focused environment over a week's time.

What a great group! Whenever you have that many event planners in one place, the energy, creativity and enthusiasm gauge goes off the chart. We are so fortunate to be in a profession that is filled with people who have so much passion for and dedication to what they produce.

While the year one class attended one-hour classes that covered the fundamentals of each area of focus, the year two attendees spent their mornings engaged in comprehensive sessions and then worked in teams to create a new event for an IFEA World Festival & Event City Award winning city. Described by Steve Schmader as part "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" and part "Celebrity Apprentice," the event teams had resources from the IFEA Festival & Event City Award winners at their disposal to aid them in their event research and development. A comprehensive exercise in project management, the week culminated in a formal presentation that "pitched" the event to the IFEA judges.

Overall, the process exemplified what makes our industry so vibrant and extraordinary. To be successful, we must be master developers and producers who are educated in the elements of many diverse and specialized professions. We not only apply our own skills to producing events but there are always several wild cards that occur and have to be managed to insure positive outcomes. We have to be able to interact and partner effectively with people from many professions and walks of life, including

government officials, vendors, sponsors, entertainers, volunteers, etc.

When I attend conferences or teach seminars I always take away new perspectives, ideas and insights into the festival and event industry. However, the most profound realization that I gained at the IFEA/NRPA Event Management School, was that event planners embody a set of skills and knowledge that is universal to all professions. What other profession integrates so many specialized areas of knowledge, marketing, sales, logistics, programming, sponsorship, concessions, contingency planning, finance, and operations to name a few? We are required to wear many hats and possess a broad set of skills that are universal.

Festival and event professionals are masters of successfully integrating all of these elements into one cohesive event while making it appear effortless. It is this broad based application of knowledge and expertise that separates you from other professionals and makes you such exceptional leaders. What a powerful testament to each of you and your many accomplishments.

So the next time someone asks you what you do the rest of the year, tell them that you are busy trying to find a place to put all the different hats that you wear every day!

Here's to another great year in the festival industry!

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