

FOUNDATION



It Happened Even With an Officer 30 ft Away.

On May 5, 2016, there was a shooting at the Kentucky Derby Festival Pegasus Parade (“Parade”). Two 15 year old boys spotted a 17 year old rival in the crowd near 4th and Broadway along the Parade route. They fired, striking their intended target while also hitting a 14 year old girl with a stray bullet (who was an innocent bystander). All of the victims were transported to the hospital and lived. The Parade was delayed for 8 minutes and when the all clear was given by Louisville Metro Police, it continued down the route to the dispersal area.

The Parade is the Festival’s oldest and longest running event. It started in 1956 with a nighttime production and has become one of the most cherished and anticipated events on the Festival’s schedule. An estimated 200,000 people attended in 2016. I chose this topic for my IFEA Foundation Chair letter because it happened to us. To the Kentucky Derby Festival, one of the largest annual events in the world, during a time when we had approximately 800 police officers along the two mile Parade route. There was an officer no more than 30 feet from where the shots were fired. It happened to us and it showed us that our Emergency Action Plans were spot on and that our relationships with LMPD and the Mayor’s office are strong.

If a shooting happens at an open air event in broad daylight with a massive police presence, what can possibly be done to prevent incidents like it in the future? What can we learn from this?

I ask those questions rhetorically

because I don’t have the answers. It’s a larger, broader question that requires further discussion and collaboration. What I can tell you is that we learned from our peers at IFEA and it helped us prepare for it. The Boston Marathon bombing served as a defining moment in our industry. It caused our staff members to reexamine our own preparedness and further refine policies that will address these types of situations. We learned and listened to those Boston officials during the IFEA Convention in Pittsburgh in 2013. We knew that someday that something similar might happen to us.

As we prepare for the upcoming IFEA Convention in Tucson this September, I encourage all of you to take full advantage of every opportunity to learn and network once you arrive at the JW Marriott. Ours is a unique industry in that nobody is afraid to share their trade secrets! We come together every year to collaborate, celebrate and pass on whatever knowledge is needed to

help somebody out. That kind of “open book” policy is nearly unheard of in the world of business. It’s one of the reasons I love working in festivals and events!

I look forward to coming together with all of you to discuss these very difficult issues. We’ll share our story and what we learned from it. In turn, we’ll also learn from you. That’s exactly what makes this Convention so worthwhile and so necessary.

JEFF ENGLISH, CFE

2016 IFEA Foundation
Board Chair
Vice President of
Administration/General
Council
Kentucky Derby Festival
Louisville, KY