



International Festivals & Events Association

Blaine Kern, Sr. 2000 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductee The Kern Companies



Known throughout New Orleans as “Mr. Mardi Gras,” Blaine Kern, Sr. has dedicated his life to enhancing the splendor and mystique of the world famous carnival parades.

Kern said his selection to IFEA’s Hall of Fame is especially meaningful because of his long ties to the organization.

“It’s an honor. I’ve been doing Mardi Gras for 50 years and I’ve known IFEA for a lot of those years,” he said. “I know the people who run IFEA and frankly, candidly, I’m flattered.”

A sign painter’s son, Kern got his start in the event world at the age of 19 when a parade organizer saw him painting a hospital mural. Dr. Henry LaRocca was captain of the Krewe of Alla, the largest parade organization on the west bank of the Mississippi River at the time. LaRocca invited the boy to help design and build floats for his parade. Since that first float, Kern has watched his profession grow tremendously.

“It never ceases to amaze me – the new types of products on the market and the incredible minds that are at work,” he said. “I used to build 11 floats for \$3,000. In 1998, I spent \$800,000 to built just one float.”

While Kern has been instrumental to that growth, he believes his greatest accomplishment lies in contributions to the community. During his long career, he paved the way for racial and ethnic tolerance in carnival organizations as well as revitalizing a city river front neighborhood.