



International Festivals & Events Association

2017 IFEA HALL OF FAME BECKY GENOWAYS, CFEE GENOWAYS EVENTS, ROCKFORD, IL

Becky Genoways became involved in events at the early age of five, when her older cousins and sister made her marry her second cousin over and over again so they could stage backyard weddings – much to her dismay. As Chairman of Special Projects in high school, her first event challenge occurred when a post-holiday Christmas tree bonfire was doused by the Fire Department due to high winds, leaving a pile of trees that went from dry to wet to ice to covered with snow AND a school administration asking what she was going to do with “her” trees.

Becky coordinated decorations for her senior prom, worked concerts at the University of Northern Colorado and back home in Rockford, Illinois - worked on community festivals, events and fund-raisers, became a caterer, owned an art gallery and staged two art fairs each year. She also began making stained glass windows, a profession that lasted almost two decades.



Like many in the industry, Becky became involved in festivals and events as a volunteer - programming a stage at “*On the Waterfront*” in Rockford, Illinois. The year was 1984. She advanced to chair the Programming Committee for ten stages and her responsibilities expanded to include the festival’s Special Events.

In 1994, Becky paid her own way to attend her first IFEA Convention and that’s when she knew what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. She enrolled in the CFEE program, completing the four-year program in two years while still serving as an *On the Waterfront* volunteer. She was one of six who had achieved the designation in Illinois and one of less than 200 worldwide. Three months later, the CEO of *On the Waterfront* resigned and the Board tapped Becky for the job. She accepted and the rest is history.

On the Waterfront grew to become one of the largest music festivals in the Midwest with over 100 performers performing in ten music venues over 30 city blocks each Labor Day weekend. Over the years, Waterfront also produced Gourmet Alley, Stars and Guitars Concerts, RibFest, a music walk and two annual fundraisers.

Under Becky’s leadership the mission of *On the Waterfront* was changed to “*Community Advancement through Celebration*” for good reason. The festival’s food booths were operated by not-for-profit organizations, who earned much-needed dollars for their causes. When beer and ticket volunteers grew too generous with their friends, Becky incentivized not-for-profit groups to manage those areas and efficiency skyrocketed. In 29 years, \$10.1 million was earned by more than 200 not-for-profits, with the revenues paying for everything from band and cheerleading uniforms to scout trips to the construction of a local church.

As CEO of *On the Waterfront*, Becky became known for her tireless work ethic, her mentoring abilities, her knowledge of all aspects of festival management, and her commitment to providing the best festival experience possible, according to one Board member. Every year, *On the Waterfront* interns learned more about running a festival than they had learned in many classes. Former employees went on to work for national organizations, using the skills they acquired under Becky’s mentoring.

A survey of online tickets purchased in 2003 showed that festival goers came from 35 states and 4 Canadian Provinces. The impacts of *On the Waterfront* were enormous with the overall economic impact measuring at over \$50 million dollars in five years. Festival goers came together downtown in record numbers every Labor Day. Waterfront became a place for family reunions and out-of-town guests, a place to run into old friends once a year,

and it was not unusual to run into visiting CEO's from other festivals. Another lasting impact was the development of a dedicated corps of volunteers, which grew to more than 4,000. Many of them still serve as volunteers for other events. On the Waterfront was awarded 46 Pinnacle awards culminating in a Gold Grand Pinnacle Award in 2002.

In 2012, *On the Waterfront* held its last festival and downtown Rockford went dark over Labor Day weekend. Becky followed her love of the industry to Memphis, Tennessee where she spends six months every year coordinating *Memphis in May International's* food, beverage, and merchandise operation and the 900-member volunteer program for the *Beale Street Music Festival*, the *World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest*, *901Fest*, and the *Great American River Run*.

"Becky is the consummate professional when it comes to just about any aspect of festival or major public assembly events," said Jim Holt, CFEE, President/CEO at the Memphis in May International Festival. *"We have enjoyed the benefit of Becky's deep event knowledge and 'get it done' attitude, as she has directed and managed key programs within our organization. Her appointment to the IFEA Hall of Fame is a richly deserved acknowledgement of her outstanding talent and dedication to the industry."*

In 2012, Becky was hired by Cultural Festivals, Inc. to manage the Food, Beverage and Hospitality programs for the *Saint Louis Art Fair*, a position she still holds.

"Becky was the outsider looking in," said Cindy Lerick, CFEE, past Executive Director of the Saint Louis Art Fair. *"She didn't know the nuances and history the Saint Louis Art Fair had with our beverage booths. Our inventory had been disappearing, sales had been plummeting, accountability from our partners were nil. Most of our players, had been with the festival since the beginning. Becky came in and managed the beverage booths like they were a business. Sales increased, theft was down and the concession partners were responsible for selling and managing. All in all, the beer distributor, concession partners and Board of Directors were happy. The Saint Louis Art Festival staff were ecstatic!!"*

In 2007, Becky became a member of the IFEA World Board of Directors, acting as Chair in 2013 and serving until 2015. Becky is a proactive supporter of IFEA programs and strongly supports their mission – "inspiring and enabling those in the festival and event industry to realize their dreams, build community, and sustain success through celebration". She shares her knowledge and expertise through presentations at state, national, and international conferences, professional training seminars and Certified Festival and Event Executive programs throughout North America and the world. One of her session attendees wrote – *"I can't thank you enough for sharing your system with us. Truly, no other IFEA session has been as beneficial to me as yours was."* Becky also teaches annually at the Event Management School, sponsored by IFEA in cooperation with the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Through her 30 years working in the festival industry, she has built a broad base of knowledge which she generously shares with others. She interacts with other event leaders to find new and better ways of doing business and has formed lasting relationships and friendships!

Becky founded Genoways Event Management in 2012 to consult with events to improve efficiency, patron experience and profitability. In 2016, she consulted with Tempe Oktoberfest to revamp their food and beverage program. She openly shares her library of information and expansive knowledge of the logistics of operating both small and large-scale events.

Becky has touched many lives and contributed in ways she does not even realize as a festival and event industry professional, working with numerous events to help them improve operations, maximize revenues and raise efficiency levels. Through her work with the CFEE Program, Becky has trained numerous budding industry professionals and through IFEA, has worked with seasoned veterans to find new and better ways of making the industry even more successful. She has shared her experiences with others throughout the United States and internationally, spreading her wealth of knowledge. She is always willing and available to lend a hand, to share her ideas, to provide expertise.

It's sort of like the movie – *It's a Wonderful Life*. Becky probably has no idea of the overall impact she has made on the industry, because she is too busy making an impact. But looking back – what a wonderful life she is leading in the festival industry – sharing the tools for community celebration with the world!

Please help us congratulate our 2017 IFEA Hall of Fame inductee, Becky Genoways, CFEE.