

# IFEA HALL OF FAME



## **Gayle Hall, CFE** **Director of Festivals & Events** **Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau** **Grapevine, TX, USA**

Long before she was hired by the City of Grapevine as a Festivals and Events Manager in 1989, Gayle Hall was on the Volunteer Steering Committee for Grapevine Festivals. With her leadership, dedication and hard work, the many festivals and events in Grapevine that Gayle helped produce, including Main Street Fest, GrapeFest and Christmas Capital of Texas, are a major reason that it is now a destination with 2.3 million visitors every year.

*"The festivals grew because ... they were produced at such high quality," Grapevine Mayor, William Tate said. "Gayle was able to produce an environment through her organization and leadership ... where people wanted to come back year after year."*



As a fifth-generation and life-long resident of Grapevine, Gayle had a unique connection to the community. From being named "Miss Grapevine Lake" as a teenager, to her early years working with the family-owned Midway Camp, Gayle had lived the history of Grapevine and was able to use that insight in her extensive career producing festivals and events, allowing them to maintain their strong emphasis on Historic Preservation, while still being innovative and appealing to multi-generations.

Gayle was a natural leader with a "get it done" attitude that became her moniker. When she saw the extensive amount of work it took to set up festivals and events, Gayle became a charter member and organizer of the 'Grapevine Dirty Dozen', a group that specializes in all the behind-the-scenes dirty work, to ensure the countless and seamless memories for all those attending. Gayle was also instrumental in the formation of the Grapevine Wine Pouring Society, a group that provides volunteers to showcase and educate the public by serving wine at festivals and events and other community organizations. And when a group of volunteers mentioned that they thought Grapevine needed a group to help educate the public on Craft Brew, she provided them the path to get started and became a Founding member, as well.

*"You'll see a million pictures of [Gayle], having been involved in running festivals, and she's always got the headset on," Grapevine Mayor Pro Tem, Darlene Freed said. "If there was anything that you needed to get done during a festival—one call to Gayle, and we knew it was taken care of."*

Gayle strongly believed in giving back to her community. When she saw that the wandering trails of cord covers and hoses on the ground at local festivals were making it difficult for wheelchairs and strollers to navigate the walkways, Gayle sought approval from the City Council for water and power lines to be run underground in the middle of seven blocks of Main Street, providing attractive pedestals with multiple outlets for vendors to access during events.

And Gayle clearly understood and valued the importance of relationships. Knowing that a number of the festivals in Grapevine caused Main Street to close for several days, Gayle and her team went out of their way to educate

businesses on what to expect from the closures and to provide opportunities for them to get actively involved in the festival footprint. To ensure that the equation was always 'win-win' for everyone, Gayle and the festival team hired local school and civic organizations to be paid volunteers. Utilizing 33 such groups at GrapeFest and 28 groups at Main Street Fest, these funds allowed for multiple organizations to continue their charitable work.

Through hard work, dedication and her ability to make things happen, Gayle was the driving force in the continued improvement of Grapevine's many festivals and events. To have an event named to the American Bus Association's "Top 100 Events of North America" is a huge honor, and Gayle successfully was able to have GrapeFest and the Christmas Capital of Texas, both receive this honor. Understanding the importance of industry awards, Gayle, along with the CVB staff and volunteers, completed a winning application to name Grapevine, Texas as an IFEA World Festival and Event City in 2012, in addition to entering and winning many IFEA/Haas & Wilkerson Pinnacle Awards. But while rightfully proud of her events and city, she felt it was important to enter award competitions not just for the awards, but to share best ideas and concepts with others.

Gayle learned the festival and event business on-the-job, by reading industry books, attending other events, and going to as many seminars and conventions as she could, so that she could learn from and network with other festival and event professionals from around the world; even when that meant traveling the world to do so. She recognized early-on that education and certification was utmost in leadership and sought out becoming an IFEA Certified Festival & Event Executive (CFEE) and a Texas Certified Festival Professional.

Gayle placed a high importance on sharing knowledge within the festival industry, spearheading the first "Texas Event Summit", a joint conference of the Texas Festivals and Events Association (TFEA) and the Texas Association of Fairs and Events (TAFE). She went on to coordinate the first Festival Exchange with the Heritage Harbor Days in Foley, Alabama and the National Cherry Festival in Traverse City, Michigan, for which she was awarded the CVB Directors Award. Training the next generation of festival managers was important to Gayle and she was very involved with the Grapevine CVB internship program, sharing not only her time, but her extensive knowledge in hospitality and festivals. She made sure each intern spent time with Grapevine Festival Volunteers so they could see all aspects of festival operations in real life.

Her commitment to Grapevine and civic organizations earned Gayle countless accolades and awards, including: Grapevine Woman of the Year; the TFEA/Dr. Carson Watt Professional of the Year Award; and the TFEA Hall of Honor Lifetime Achievement Award; among many others. She proudly served on the IFEA Foundation Board, in addition to serving as a board member and President of the Texas Festivals and Events Association; Texas Association of Fairs & Events; and the Grapevine Heritage Ambucs.

Sadly, Gayle was taken from us far too soon, in August of 2021. Her 'Celebration of Life' was an event for the ages in Grapevine. Named "Gayle's Taste of Grapevine", 18 local restaurants provided food and beverage for the occasion as Gayle took one last journey down her beloved Main Street on a horse drawn hearse. 250 of her closest friends, family, and colleagues walked alongside her down the Main Street mile in 90-degree heat, in honor of the remarkable woman they knew and cherished. She would have loved it!

Gayle would have been so honored to receive the IFEA Hall of Fame Award. She had so much respect and admiration for all the industry professionals that helped her along the way. Even in her passing, Gayle continues to impact future generations of festival and event professionals through her 'Get It Done' IFEA Foundation Legacy Scholarship, which will continue, as will all that she shared with so many of us, in perpetuity. Hers was a life and career that we can all aspire to.

**Please join us in honoring and remembering our 2022 IFEA Hall of Fame inductee, Gayle Hall, CFEE.**