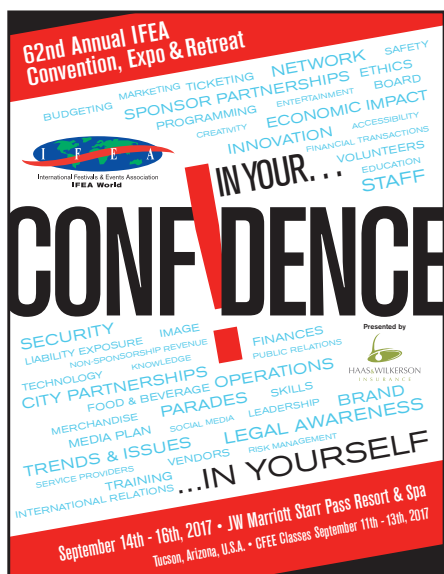




## CHRISTMAS IN SEPTEMBER



I look forward to IFEA's Annual Convention, Expo & Retreat the way my children look forward to Christmas morning. The planning, excitement, anticipation and execution is exhilarating and exhausting. So many of my professional memories are wrapped around the annual convention. Meeting Pete van de Putte

shared by Guy Laflamme, Bill Flinn, Bruce Erley, CFEE, Gail Alofsin, and so many more who are experts in their field.

The Expo offers so much insight into the world of operations, entertainment and fresh ideas on elevating your event in any number of ways. Whether it's the need for a new performance group, a laser light show, spectacular fireworks, sponsorship evaluation, fencing, insurance, or a beautiful new website, the Expo has it all. And the Wheel of Crap. You've not experienced the IFEA Expo until you've had a spin on the Saffire Wheel of Crap!

This is all to say, the IFEA's Annual Convention, Expo & Retreat is an experience not to be missed. The return on your investment is beyond imaginable. There has never been a single year that I did not come home with more ideas and tangible work product than I had time to execute. There is so much to learn and absorb. And from the best people on the planet who freely and graciously share. There are memories to be made. Friendships to foster. Whether personal or professional, lives change as a result.

And the best part is you get to do it all in the quiet, comfortable, relaxing, scenic resort of Tucson, AZ. Tucson is a beautiful place. On my last visit to Tucson, I found myself in the downtown area mesmerized by the variety of murals coated on pretty much any surface available. I was especially intrigued by what seemed to be a series of paintings expressing the rich journey of those who live and experience Tucson. The articulate and emotional storytelling executed with vibrant colors and shapes juxtaposed against the harsh and jagged lines of the Santa Catalina Natural Area was exhilarating and provocative. Tucson is a city of remarkable beauty that celebrates its story being told through the eyes of visual artists.

I can't wait for the start of the IFEA's 62nd Annual Convention, Expo & Retreat on September 14th! I look forward to seeing you in Tucson, AZ. And if you want a tour of the Tucson Murals, let me know. I'd love to share them with you.

and experiencing the dfest® Hospitality Suite for the first time, an evening out at Red Rocks in Colorado, the Foundation Night Party at Kern Studios in New Orleans, Fireworks on Coors Field, backstage VIP entrance to Disney World in California. The Sound and Light Show on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. And who doesn't enjoy a Tequila toast on the spectacular veranda of the JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort in the heart of the Sonoran Desert?

While the location and glamour of the one-of-a-kind experience is sensational, my most memorable moments are those during a session when I am reminded why I love this business and what a privilege it is to be in the same room with brilliant people who care and love their community. Penny McBride encouraging us to get the right people on our bus. Ted Baroody's excitement over the top 20 ideas in festivals and events, Amy Kule sharing her experiences with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, and ANYTIME Jean McFaddin said anything at all! The brilliant vision and surgical expertise

**Stephen King, CFEE**  
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