



MY JOURNEY

INTO THE FESTIVALS AND EVENTS INDUSTRY

My journey into the festivals and events industry started 24 years ago. It wasn't what I thought I would be doing with my life and now I can't imagine doing anything else. To find myself at the end of this year serving as the chair of the International Festivals and Events Association is somewhat surreal and something for which I will be forever grateful. I carry a deep appreciation for this organization and the people who bring celebration to communities throughout the world.

Our industry recently gathered in Tucson for the 62nd Annual IFEA Convention, Expo & Retreat. We were gifted with remarkable presentations and the opportunity to steal several new ideas. I have many highlights from the weekend, including a fantastic IFEA Foundation Party & Live Auction and Kendra Wright's closing session. Highest among them was experiencing the analysis of Ottawa 2017 by our good friend and the event's Executive Director, Guy Laflamme. Never have I been to a convention where those attending responded to a presentation with a sustained standing ovation.

We all emerged from the 2017 Convention with renewed energy, ideas and focus. My hope is you have translated that into action in your community. The convention strengthened our relationships and resolve to build better communities.

Since the Convention we have been witness to uncertain discourse and unspeakable tragedy. During times in which we question almost everything, I am reminded of our primary responsibility as festival and event organizers. To build community. Our expertise and vision are needed now more than ever given this uncertain time to bring our communities together in celebration of those we've lost and the first-responders who risked their lives to save others. Thank you for your continued efforts to celebrate what is good in the world and your community.

I wish to congratulate the members of the IFEA World and IFEA Foundation Board of Directors for their leadership and support of the organization during the past year. The folks that make up these boards dedicate their time and treasures to ensure the organization continues to exceed your needs and aspirations. They too have a deep appreciation for this organization and I'm humbled to work alongside them to further our industry.

The past year has afforded me the opportunity to experience the organization from the inside. I've witnessed the tireless efforts of Steve Schmader, CFEE and the IFEA staff. I've celebrated with professionals from across the country who received their CFEE at the Event Management School. I've been thrilled by the increasing number of young professionals and students engaging with our industry. I traveled to South Korea to champion the virtues of festivals and events as a catalyst for revitalization and growth. And I visited Ottawa, Canada to witness the work of visionary event leaders who bolstered a nation through celebration.

In January, Jeff Curtis takes over as your chair. Jeff just celebrated his 20th year with the Portland Rose Festival. We are fortunate to have someone with Jeff's experience and passion lead the organization.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your chair. I look forward to my continued involvement in the organization that is our beacon of support.

Stephen King, CFEE
2017 IFEA World Board Chair
Executive Director
Des Moines Arts Festival®
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