

THE ROLE OF EVENTS



The role of events from place branding to placemaking is legendary and the “BOLD Choices” 64th Annual IFEA Convention, Expo & Retreat presented by Haas & Wilkerson Insurance in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia was, as my late dad used to say “best ever”. I say best ever, because every year the pilgrimage from South Africa to the IFEA Convention gets better and better.

I am a great follower of the Power of 10+ concept developed by the Project for Public Spaces to evaluate and facilitate Placemaking at multiple city scales. It shows how paying attention to the human experience when building a city's destination and districts can have immediate and widespread impacts. The idea behind this concept is that places thrive when users have a range of reasons (10+) to be there. These might include a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and people to meet. And this is exactly what our festivals and events in communities do. So, I thought I would share with you my 10 highlights of the IFEA BOLD Choices experience.

1. Having lost my luggage en-route from Johannesburg to New York, I was pleased that I had made the decision to enjoy the journey and travel down to Colonial Williamsburg on the Amtrak, as this meant I had a four-hour window of opportunity when I arrived at Penn Station from JFK to go on a quick shopping spree. Walking down 34th Street to Macy's – punching the air with excitement, my mind spinning, remembering all the wonderful experiences that I have been privileged to have shared with the many IFEA members I've met, and particularly our late, dearest friend, Jean McFaddin, a legend of the Macy's Parade.
2. Arriving in Williamsburg at 2:00 a.m. in the morning and in no time, one of the dapper, ever smiling and friendly staff from Williamsburg Lodge arrived to professionally transport me to 'home' for the next week. Setting the tone of what was to be a professional, great hospitality experience for us all. Even when our IFEA weather experts predicted a rain shower during the “Garden Party” Foundation Night & Live Auction on the Thursday - a collective effort IFEA Staff, Foundation Board, Members and the hotel team managed to transform the Convention venue into a garden party.
3. The CFEE Professional Certification classes – for anyone who hasn't experienced the magic of participating and achieving their CFEE – Certified Festivals & Events Executive – plan to do it. The presenters and the amazing institutional knowledge they share so openly and available for everyone to make our industry a better one, is legendary. Thank you to our CFEE sponsor, IFEA Endorsed Partner, Kaliff Insurance.
4. The Opening Ceremony - the beautiful set, the performances, our IFEA President & CEO, Steven Wood Schmader's

- welcome, and the keynote “Making Magic: The Power of Events to Shape Impressions, Cities and History” – reinforcing the role that festivals and events play in local communities.
5. The IFEA Awards Luncheon – paying tribute to the people who have made and make our industry great and continue to light the way through their bold commitment and creativity. Congratulations to the fourteen CFEE – Certified Festival & Event Executive graduates. A big shout out for LuAnn Chapman Gatts as our 2019 Volunteer of the Year. The recognition of our 2019 IFEA World Festival & Event City Awards and the wonderful tribute to our 2019 IFEA Hall of Fame Inductees, Tom Bisignano, CFEE - Freelance Producer and Chuck O'Connor CFEE – Sponsorship Consultant.
 6. The IFEA/Haas & Wilkerson Insurance 25th Anniversary Pinnacle Awards which honored and paid tribute to both creativity and excellence in multiple categories, from marketing to merchandise, operations to sponsorship, all leading up to the presentation of the coveted Grand Pinnacle Award. Congratulations to all for entering into the Pinnacle Awards and especially to those who won in their respective categories.
 7. The IFEA Expo where we had real quality time to explore the next great idea and negotiate best deals with the professional industry's top suppliers. And the added value of the d'fest Hospitality Suite every night which provided us with a time and a place to unwind, relax, connect and continue the conversations with members and suppliers.
 8. The IFEA Foundation Garden Party and Live Auction – what a joy to see an amazing group of 'volunteers' and hotel staff turning the foyer of the Colony Ballroom into a gorgeous garden due to the weather conditions. And what a great environment for a record IFEA Foundation – great environment, great wine, great music, and most importantly great bidding! Congrats to the amazing IFEA Foundation team and all the volunteers that made this such a successful event.
 9. Lesa Ukman, Founder of Lesa Ukman Partnerships and Curt Mosel, Chief Operation Officer of ArtsQuest shared with us the broader pro-social framework of value used to quantify the community civic and human capital created by festivals and events. Using the ProSocial Valuation to tap new sources of revenue - introducing the model of Social Capital and Return on Purpose created through events. Joe Goldblatt's closing keynote – “Never-Ending Story: The Continuing Power and Evolution of Events.” It was indeed a walk down memory lane for Joe and many of us as he shared some of the highlights of a 50-year career in live event production and education.
 10. The IFEA World Board Meeting – always a great experience and a privilege to work with the amazing IFEA

Staff – a big thank you to IFEA President & CEO, Steve Schmader, CFEE and his team for not only such a great Convention, but for their continued professionalism in everything they do. Additionally, welcome to our new 2020 IFEA Board Chair, Ted Baroody, CFEE, President of Norfolk FestEvents and Chair Elect, Diana Mayhew, CFEE, President at the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

I personally want to thank everyone for the great experience that I was privileged to have as the 2019 IFEA World Board Chair. It was absolutely inspiring. The shared experiences from the Board that our youth were part of in during our IFEA World Board Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa this July, will never be forgotten.

I'd also like to extend an additional 'Thank You' to Cindy Lerick, CFEE, President at The ART of Events, LLC. She had the opportunity to spend some extra time with us in Johannesburg, South Africa and the local communities prior to the IFEA World Board meeting in July. She was an amazing asset to have with us there and from her experiences with us, she created a "GoFundMe" campaign to raise funds for our Skills Village Xperience 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Birthday Club. We, at Skills Village were so overwhelmed to receive a 'big cheque' for \$5,000 from IFEA Members and Board Members, in addition to a \$1,000 Rotary contribution from LuAnn Chapman Gatts, our 2019 IFEA Volunteer of the Year. (LuAnn also attended our Board Meeting Trip in South Africa and inspired our youth on the importance and value of volunteerism.)

What a great legacy for the youth who will be part of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) events and activities in the coming year as they learn to plan, prepare and produce Birthday Xperiences as well as SDG events. Thank you, thank you, thank you, to all for the generosity that will support our entrepreneurial youth to gain valuable experience in creating small activities and events that will make a difference in the lives of those empowered in the process. We believe that festivals and events can play a huge role in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities within and among countries. Target 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Events can create jobs and make a difference in the world – let's do it!

#LetYouthCreateJobs #InclusiveEntrepreneurship #SustainableEventsforSustainableLivelihoods

Thank you for a great year!

Janet Landey, CSEP

IFEA World Board Chair
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