



## A TIME TO BE THANKFUL

Unless you have been hiding underneath a rock for the last 18 months or so, it has been a very difficult time for the festival and event industry. Postponed events. Cancelled festivals. Postponed events only to be postponed further. More cancelled festivals. In some cases, early on we were able to move forward with virtual events. More recently, live events have come back, often with reduced capacities and several limitations.

I am not pointing this out to be negative. Instead, I want us to be thankful...thankful for what we have accomplished as an industry the past couple of years. Our backs were against the wall, and still are to a large degree, yet we persevered. We created new avenues to showcase our programs to replace traditional live festivals and events. We demonstrated to our sponsors what true partnerships are all about. We worked with government agencies and local authorities to ensure our festivals and events were conducted in the safest way possible.

There are so many success stories that we should celebrate. The Portland Rose Festival created a virtual parade. The 500 Festival held a virtual half marathon. MusikFest held a virtual concert series. These are just three of numerous examples of where IFEA members rolled up their sleeves and were determined not to be stopped by a global pandemic.

And since Spring, there have been so many live events that have taken place. Here at Memphis in May, we held our World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest during its annual time in mid-May on the banks of the Mississippi River in Tom Lee Park. We created enhanced Safety and Security measures that included reduced number of teams and patrons. Despite the restrictions we still had 130 teams compete for prestigious bragging rights as World Champion and sell out crowds three of the four days. Competitors and spectators alike were so thankful we forged ahead and held the most prestigious barbecue contest on the planet.

We were not alone in producing live festivals and events. The Philadelphia Flower moved their entire event outdoors as opposed to their traditional home in the Convention Center. Other IFEA members that shined recently include the Des Moines Arts Festival, Kansas City Irish Fest, The Great New York State Fair, Macy's 4th of July Fireworks, Cedar Rapids Freedom Festival, Artfest Fort Myers, North Carolina Azealia Festival, National Cherry Festival, Summerfest, Winterfest, Cherry Creek Arts Festival, Treefort Music Festival, Macon Georgia's International

Cherry Blossom Festival, Parker Peach County Peach Festival, Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion Festival, Pittsburgh Irish Festival, National Cherry Blossom Festival, Camp Leavenworth, and St. Louis Arts Festival all were held with great success and fanfare.

I'm highlighting these few examples because we do have reason to be excited and thankful as an industry. To emphasize the point, I would like to offer this quote from author Roy T. Bennett. "Be thankful for everything that happens in your life; it's all an experience."

Yes, it has been quite an experience and one we hope to not face again, but we will all be better for it. While on the topic of being thankful, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the IFEA Foundation Board. I have had the honor and privilege as serving as the IFEA Foundation Board Chair in 2020 and 2021.

The IFEA Foundation Board has worked side by side with the IFEA World Board and Staff in heading up the organization's fundraising efforts. I am so proud of the IFEA Foundation Board for taking the lead to come up with new and creative ways to generate much needed funds for IFEA.

Thank you, Alison English, Erin Fortune, Annie Frisoli, David Knutson, Sam Lemheney, Delores MacAdam, Keli O'Neill Wenzel, Kat Paye, Cassie Roberts Dispenza, Ira Rosen, Bruce Smiley-Kaliff and the recently passed Gayle Hall for serving with such dedication and honor.

However, our efforts would not be as meaningful if it was not for the IFEA membership. We understand the personal and organizational challenges you have and still are facing. Yet, despite facing adversity and uncertainty, IFEA members have stepped up in so many ways. You have volunteered to take pies in the face. You have secured special trips and packages not to mention silent auction items. Lastly, you have shown the importance of IFEA through your pocketbook. For that, on behalf of the entire IFEA organization, we are thankful.

**Kevin Grothe, CFE**

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