

USING THE IFEA CONVENTION AS A **TIME TO REFLECT, LEARN AND GROW**



With the beautiful city of McAllen, Texas welcoming us back for the 66th Annual IFEA Convention, Expo & Retreat from October 9-11 soon upon us in addition to just wrapping up the IFEA World Board meeting and a two-week vacation road trip across the USA, it has been a time of reflection and relaxation.

Being together with the IFEA World and Foundation Board of Directors in beautiful city of Traverse City, Michigan during IFEA Member, the National Cherry Festival, reminded me how much the power of festivals and events brings people and their communities together to celebrate. The IFEA Board and Foundation Board would like to extend a huge thank you to Kat Paye, CFEE, Executive Director of the National Cherry Festival, her entire staff and board for welcoming us in as VIPs and showing us amazing hospitality and a wonderful time.

Immediately following the World Board meeting, I met up with my family in Nashville to continue a cross USA road trip to Washington DC and back to Arizona. During our travels through 10+ states, I reflected on all the friendships I've made during IFEA Conventions during the past 40 years and the many festivals I've been blessed to attend here in the USA and internationally because of the IFEA.

My time of reflection also reminded me how much I look forward to the IFEA Convention. Not only to see longtime friends, but also make new ones while networking. And to learn about the Ripple Effects of our industry's changing technologies, trends, and issues. It's also the perfect time for me to reflect on the work and events my team produces and permits for the city of Scottsdale as well as to share these experiences with others who have similar situations.

This year's Convention comes at a time where each of us are in different phases of planning and implementing our festivals and events. No matter what the time is for

each of us, these few days have proven essential to our industry as the Convention is designed to provide networking and educational opportunities to share and grow our professional experiences and expertise. It's the perfect opportunity to bring your staff, board members and volunteers to meet industry experts and take advantage of this great opportunity to prepare for, and respond to, the ripple effects that are influencing our industry.

My favorites during the IFEA Convention are the Opening Session to hear from IFEA President & CEO Steve Schmader, CFEE, followed by the Opening Keynote that always inspire. Another is the IFEA/Haas & Wilkerson Pinnacle Awards to glean the winners of all the creative award categories. Spending time at the EXPO to visit with longtime vendors and hear and see new technology opportunities as well as spend in-person time with the Affinity Groups I "attend" throughout the year are also favorites. And, of course, the IFEA Foundation Night is always a great time to network and raise dollars for the mission of IFEA and its Foundation.

Based on the update Steve Schmader gave the IFEA World and Foundation Boards during our Summer Meetings, I know the 66th Annual IFEA Convention, Expo & Retreat is shaping up to be fabulous. On behalf of the World Board, thank you for making the IFEA a part of your professional resource pool and I hope you will join us at the Convention this October in McAllen, Texas to see what the Ripple Effects are for your festivals and events and our industry.

Karen Churchard, CFEE

IFEA World Board Chair
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