

# IFEA PRESIDENT'S LETTER



## FESTIVALS & EVENTS: THE 'COMMUNITY CAPITAL' RIPPLE EFFECT

**A**s we look forward to a year and future in a new and gradually normalizing post-pandemic world, I have been reminded of the remarkable (and often unrecognized) ripple effect that those in our industry (individuals, organizations and events) are able to have on the communities that we serve; our global professional peers; and the many, many lives that we are able to positively touch through the unique platform that we are fortunate to be able to create and use. In a recent conversation, one of my own peers asked if I could reshare one of my President's Letters that I wrote some years ago. After rereading it myself, I was pleased to see that its message is just as important today, perhaps more so in light of the challenges of the last three years, and I hope that its ripple effect will continue to your benefit.

In a constantly changing, complex and often frightening world, there is a real need for consistent, trusted, safe and positive outlets that bring us all together. Outlets that are an essential part

of building and ensuring common community visions and quality of life. That celebrate who we are when we are at our best. That serve as our community 'calling cards.'

Those in our industry and those we partner with often talk about the economic impact of our events and organizations to the communities that we serve – a topic that has come up more often in the last decade as city, county, state, provincial, territorial and national governments look to justify their continued support (in cash and/or services) of those events. And while the events (individually and combined) that make up our industry have no trouble justifying the economic infusions that they provide, it is the much larger and broader appreciation for and understanding of the "Community Capital" that our industry has helped to build and provide around the world, that is the truly undervalued return in this equation. "Community Capital" that creates and builds value for virtually every segment of the cities, countries and regions that we serve. "Community Capital" that further gains in value during tough economic, politically turbulent, and other challenging times. "Community Capital" that grows when nurtured and holds us all

together as one. "Community Capital" that can be fairly argued is a far better investment, with far greater returns - especially long-term - than most any other 'economic stimulus' alternative that I am aware of, and one which is especially difficult to replace if allowed to go away...by choice or by consequence.

Investing in the 'Community Capital' created by Festivals and Events may provide the most valuable, long-term, returns available to our global cities. Imagine what the value to, and ripple effect within, our 'communities' would be if they were offered a tool that could:

- Bond all the people, businesses, media, service organizations, educational institutions, neighborhoods and government entities together toward a common vision that would strengthen their individual pride and commitment to their common community;
- Encourage and enable new creativity and innovation through direct opportunities for participation by every age group and segment of the population;
- Highlight and celebrate the diversity of the community, bringing together many unique backgrounds and demographics while fostering appreciation for all;
- Provide opportunities for family bonding, participation by all economic levels, and an all-inclusive atmosphere;
- Build a positive regional, national or even global brand awareness and image for the community...a 'calling card' of who we are and what we celebrate when we are at our best;
- Fuel new dialogues, educational opportunities and shared experiences by lowering barriers in a safe and welcoming environment;
- Drive tourism and destination marketing goals and messaging;
- Provide a positive mechanism through which to recruit new businesses, conventions, employees and residents;
- Drive economic impact that translates into jobs, tax revenues, and enhanced infrastructure improvements;
- Provide enhanced exposure opportunities for arts and cultural programs, institutions, and performers; not-for-profit causes; and selected topics of importance (e.g., health focuses and programs; accessibility and inclusivity; climate change, STE(A)M education, and others), in an open and non-threatening environment;
- Provide year-round opportunities for public involvement, education, and improvement projects, while building a community-wide network of human relationships;
- Train and facilitate legions of community volunteers whose skills can be used by countless community agencies and programs throughout the year, while also encouraging the value of *giving back* by all age groups;
- Build lasting legacies and memories that can be shared and fostered by families, friends and multiple generations;
- Reach out to include those who may no longer feel a part of their community, but who need those connections now more than ever (e.g., nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, and hospitals);
- Highlight underused venues or sections of the community, encouraging further community investment and development;
- Provide highly visible public relations opportunities for city facilities and services (e.g., police, parks, fire, transportation services, paramedics, and venues), building a community-wide appreciation and understanding of their value to all. A reason to vote 'yes' on the next bond or funding consideration.

It would be hard to put a price tag on such a tool; and yet, that is exactly what our industry and events, locally and globally,

already provide (and more). Perhaps we haven't presented our case strongly enough in that role, but recent world challenges have caused us to re-evaluate our value. In a constantly changing and complex world, our 'communities' will need everyone to feel a personal buy-in toward identifying creative new solutions - people who already feel like they are part of the community; part of the team; part of the solutions. I am convinced that our industry will be at the forefront of bonding our 'communities' together to that end, providing unparalleled investment value for all of our partners.

Given that goal, the power of the IFEA brand to affect change, build credibility, and create new opportunities for our industry - whether it is in Boise, Idaho or Boryeong, South Korea - does not lie in a single person, event/organization, or location. It lies in the strength of the whole, working together. It lies in all of us - every event and every event professional, in every community, state, province, territory, country, continent or region around the world - working every day to produce the highest quality events possible; exemplifying the credibility of our peers; participating on behalf of something larger than ourselves and our own organizations; and sharing visions that can change communities, change people and change the world for the better. A global ripple effect.

Festivals & Events: The 'Core' of Our Communities. Essential to Our World.

**I wish you all a year that allows you to truly recognize, share and celebrate the positive ripple effect that each of you have on so many others.**

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