



SEVENTY YEARS STRONG:

## CELEBRATING OUR LEGACY AND BUILDING OUR FUTURE

**A**s we look back on the incredible memories made earlier this fall in beautiful Palm Springs, California, I continue to feel immense gratitude for everyone who joined us for the International Festivals & Events Association's (IFEA) 70th Anniversary Convention & Expo. Though some time has passed since we gathered beneath those iconic desert skies, the energy, inspiration, and connections that filled that week are still resonating throughout our global IFEA family.

Our 70th Anniversary Convention was so much more than a milestone, it was a living celebration of seven decades of creativity, community, and collaboration. We honored our history, reflected on how far we've come as an industry, and looked boldly toward the future with renewed purpose and excitement. Every conversation, presentation, and shared laugh reminded us why we do what we do, and why the IFEA continues to be the heartbeat of the festivals and events world.

Palm Springs provided the perfect setting for this celebration. The warmth of the sun, the beauty of the desert, and the hospitality of our hosts all came together to create a truly unforgettable experience. From the very first welcome reception to the final farewell, there was an undeniable sense of connection. It didn't matter whether you were attending your first IFEA Convention or your thirtieth, everyone felt part of something bigger, something lasting.

The educational sessions and keynote presentations this year were some of the most engaging and thought-provoking we've ever had. Our lineup of speakers, leaders, visionaries, and innovators from across the globe, challenged us to think creatively and strategically. We explored how festivals and events can adapt to new technologies, address evolving audience expectations, foster inclusivity, and strengthen community impact. Each session was filled with ideas and insights that attendees have already begun to implement back home, proving that the IFEA continues to shape the very future of our industry.

Of course, no IFEA Convention would be complete without moments of celebration and camaraderie, and the Platinum Palms Pool Party was a highlight of the week! Surrounded by friends and colleagues, we gathered under the stars to relax, laugh, and celebrate the shared passion that brings us all together. It was one of those evenings that perfectly captured the joy of what we do: creating moments of connection and happiness. The laughter echoing around and, in the pool, the spontaneous dance moves, and the warm glow of conversation will be remembered for years to come.

A special thank-you goes to everyone who supported the IFEA Foundation's fundraising efforts during the Convention.

Whether you joined in the Duck Race, purchased 50/50 raffle tickets, or took a chance on our Ultimate Experience raffle, you played an important part in strengthening the Foundation's mission. Your enthusiasm, generosity, and sense of fun helped us reach an outstanding milestone; we raised over \$42,000 this year to support future Convention speakers, scholarships, and educational initiatives.

That achievement is a true testament to the heart of our IFEA community. Every dollar raised represents a commitment to the future of our profession. Those funds ensure that we can continue to provide high-quality education, meaningful scholarships, and access to the resources that make our industry thrive. The Foundation exists to empower learning and leadership within the festivals and events world, and thanks to your generosity, we can continue to do just that.

Whether you bought a duck, raised your paddle, or simply cheered from the sidelines, you made a difference. You helped sustain the programs that nurture the next generation of festival and event leaders. You ensured that emerging professionals have access to the same inspiration, mentorship, and opportunities that have defined IFEA for decades. Together, we are not only celebrating our past, but we are also investing in our future.

On behalf of the IFEA Foundation Board, I want to express my deepest appreciation for your continued support. The Foundation is built on generosity, of time, of resources, and of spirit, and that generosity was on full display in Palm Springs. Each year, I am reminded that our community's strength lies in our shared commitment to lift one another up and to advance the art and business of celebration around the world.

Serving as Chair of the IFEA Foundation Board over the past year has been one of the greatest honors of my professional journey. It has been a privilege to work alongside such passionate, dedicated leaders who care deeply about our mission and our members. Together, we have faced challenges, seized opportunities, and continued to build on the Foundation's strong legacy. Most of all, we have seen firsthand how the IFEA brings people together, across borders, industries, and generations, through a common love for festivals, events, and community.

Every year, I am inspired by the people who make up this organization. From those who have been with us for decades to the new members who are just discovering their professional family, every individual brings something unique and valuable to our network. It's that diversity of experience and perspective that makes the IFEA so special. Ours is an industry defined by creativity, collaboration, and heart, and the Foundation reflects those same values in everything we do.

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The 70th Anniversary offered us the chance to look back with pride and forward with excitement. When the IFEA began, festivals and events were smaller, simpler, and often locally focused. Over the decades, our industry has grown into a global force for economic vitality, cultural exchange, and civic pride. The IFEA has been there every step of the way, guiding, connecting, and celebrating those who bring communities together through creativity and celebration.

As I reflect on this milestone year, I am filled with gratitude for everyone who has contributed to our success, past and present. And as I prepare to pass the leadership torch, I do so with full confidence in the future of the Foundation. It is my honor to announce that Jessica Kaminskas of the Detroit Parade Company will be stepping into the role of Chair of the IFEA Foundation Board.

Jessica is a respected leader in our field with an incredible track record of creativity, professionalism, and dedication. Her vision and enthusiasm for the IFEA's mission are inspiring, and I have no doubt that she will guide the Foundation into a bright and successful next chapter. I am excited to see how her leadership will continue to build upon our accomplishments, strengthen our programs, and expand our

impact in the years to come.

Jessica, thank you for your commitment and your willingness to serve. You bring a depth of experience and a fresh perspective that will be invaluable to the Foundation's continued growth. I know that under your guidance, the IFEA Foundation will remain a powerful force for education, innovation, and professional excellence.

To my fellow Board members, thank you for your passion, your wisdom, and your unwavering support throughout the year. It has been a joy to collaborate with such a talented and committed group of individuals. Together, we have achieved great things, and I am confident that even greater successes are on the horizon.

To our sponsors, partners, and exhibitors, your support makes everything possible. Your investment in the IFEA Foundation ensures that our members have access to top-tier education and networking opportunities, and we are grateful for your continued partnership. To the IFEA Staff, thank you for the countless hours you dedicate to ensuring that every event runs smoothly. You are the heart and hands of this organization, and your work often shines brightest behind the scenes.

And to all of our attendees, thank you for joining us, for bringing your energy,

your ideas, and your enthusiasm to Palm Springs. Whether you came to learn, to connect, or to celebrate, your presence made this Convention one to remember. You are the reason we continue to grow, evolve, and thrive as an association.

As we move forward from our 70th year, let's carry the lessons and inspiration from Palm Springs into everything we do. The world needs what we create, moments of joy, connection, and community. The festivals and events we produce remind people of what's possible when we come together, and the IFEA will continue to champion that mission every day.

Thank you again for your generosity, your participation, and your belief in the work of the IFEA and the IFEA Foundation. Together, we celebrated a milestone seventy years in the making, and together, we are laying the groundwork for the next seventy.

Cherry-O!

**Kat Paye, CFEE**

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