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IAFE CONVENTION NEWS



December 1-4 • Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center • San Antonio, Texas

IAFE Annual Convention & Trade Show Deemed a Success

SPRINGFIELD, MO — December 6, 2019 — The International Association of Fairs and Expositions' 129th Annual Convention, held Dec. 1-4 in San Antonio, Texas, has been declared a success, with a sold-out trade show, more than 100 educational sessions, and just under 3,000 attendees from Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and the U.S.

"It was exciting to see so many new attendees this year and to hear the excitement in their voices as they talked about their first time experiences at the Convention," stated IAFE President and CEO Marla Calico.

The educational sessions saw standing room only crowds. The PowerTalks and Champions Circle presentations, 15-minute presentations from fairs focusing on one thing that was very successful for them, were especially popular, creating discussions and networking that spilled into the hallways afterwards. The entire program reflected the topics of most importance to IAFE members – more than 48,000 votes were cast online to determine the final program. Topics covered everything from security to social media, ticketing to technology, non-fair facility usage to a fresh look at the carnival and fair layout.

"We so appreciate the dedication of the Convention Program Committee to develop such an outstanding program. They worked diligently, meeting regularly for the past two years," stated Calico.

Although the survey of 272 exhibitors in the sold out Trade Show is yet to be conducted, traffic on the show floor appeared brisk.

"We had a sold out show, featuring a myriad of new attractions as well as new technologies – specifically in the ticketing sector. In addition, a long time exhibitor reported they had their best show ever," stated IAFE Director of Sales Steve Siever.

The social event that raises funds for the IAFE Education Foundation, a separate non-profit organization, was hugely successful. The "Raisin' for a Reason" event, themed "Wagons & Whiskey," featured a live and silent auction, saw an increase in ticket sales, and generated more than \$30,000 for the Foundation. Funds raised from this event directly support delivery of courses for the IAFE's Institute of Fair Management.

A new theme and tag line for IAFE members was premiered Wednesday evening. The "Follow Me to the IAFE" campaign, with the tag lines "Ignite-Excel-Unite," was well received and member benefit boosts and awareness of the reasons to "follow me to the IAFE" will be rolling out over the next several months.

The Annual Convention always features recognition of individuals and fairs for service and excellence. Kent Hojem, CFE and CEO of the Washington State Fair in Puyallup, received the Association's highest honor, the Hall of Fame award. Emily Grunewald of the Red River Valley Fair in West Fargo, N.D., was named Rising Star and Criss Neiman of the Wyoming Association of Fairs was selected as the State & Provincial Associations' Executive of the Year. All award winners in the various contests for members are listed at www.iafecontest.com.

In the annual business meeting, Jeremy Parsons of the Clay County Fair in Spencer, Iowa, was elected second vice chair. Jessica Underberg of the Erie County Fair in Hamburg, N.Y., passed the chair's gavel to Nancy Smith of the South Carolina State Fair in Columbia. Newly elected Directors included Zone 1 Director Kathryn Hunter of the Topsham Fair, Topsham, Maine; Zone 3 Director Alicia Shoults of the Ohio State Fair, Columbus; Zone 7 Director Scott Stoller of the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo; State & Provincial Associations Representative Nancy Pitz of the Rocky Mountain Association of Fairs; and Director at Large from Associate Members Michael Wood of Wood Entertainment Company.

Attendance at the event was a bit off, with a number of people from the Midwest impacted by weather at their events as well as the drastically late harvest. Many fairs in the Midwest are run by volunteers who had to make a decision to stay home to harvest.

The industry's largest event and trade show will be held in San Antonio, Nov. 29-Dec. 2, 2020, with the theme of "Clear Vision." The Association has contracted for the facilities of the Henry B. González Convention Center through 2021. Negotiations and contracting are underway for Convention sites for 2022 through 2025 when the Association will begin moving the event to different cities in the U.S. each year.

ABOUT IAFE

The International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE), based in Springfield, Mo., is a voluntary, nonprofit corporation, serving state, provincial, regional, and county agricultural fairs, shows, exhibitions, and expositions. Its associate members include state and provincial associations of fairs, non-agricultural expositions and festivals, associations, corporations, and individuals

engaged in providing products and services to its members, all of whom are interested in the improvement of fairs, shows, expositions, and allied fields.

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