



March 23, 2020

A Statement on the COVID 19 Crisis

The COVID 19 Pandemic impacts every element of our society, and the fair industry is no exception. The losses from cancelled fairs and non-fair events at fairgrounds is now in the hundreds of millions of dollars across the globe just since the first week of March. The allied businesses – so vital to the success of fairs – are also hit hard. Carnival operators, mobile food operators, suppliers, and entertainers are suffering huge financial losses.

The IAFE exists to serve its members and are doing that in the following ways:

Advocacy: We have worked closely with the OABA's lobbyist to provide data for building a case for support from the US Congress and we have put out the call to action to our members, asking them to contact their Senators and Representatives. We've also asked members in certain states whose Senators have crucial votes in the Finance Committee to reach out with some very specific messaging.

In addition, the IAFE has long been involved closely with the United States Department of Homeland Security, with fairgrounds facilities identified as part of the Commercial Sector critical infrastructure. I am in regular communication – almost daily – with DHS about the role fairgrounds are playing in this crisis. Today, we know that fairgrounds across the USA are being used as drive-through testing sites, housing for quarantined individuals, temporary hospitals, and are being contacted by their local or state health authorities to also serve as warehousing sites, locations for FEMA housing trailers, and more. Fairgrounds and the fair organizations that run them have always been there for their communities' needs and this crisis is no different.

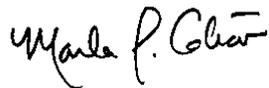
Uniting the Network: We are using a variety of tools to bring members together virtually to share ideas and information, to use the power of the network to consider options and solutions. It started with a schedule change at the "Impact & Impressions" Seminar, necessitated because of the halting of a mass gathering in Columbus, Ohio, on March 6, where we gathered the delegates into a three-hour think tank and idea sharing session. That also gave Association staff insight into the type of tools and information resources members would need right away – we had those posted on our dedicated website page within a matter of hours. We launched a "Let's Talk" virtual roundtable series, beginning with an overall discussion on March 17. Capped at 100 logged on sites, we captured many thoughts from fairs across North America and had a discussion recap and recording of the session posted to our web portal within hours. Building on this, our members will be notified of group calls, committee discussions, and future "Let's Talk" sessions. The next one will focus on communications and is slated for March 26 (2:00 p.m. CDT). Recordings of "Let's Talk" sessions and notes from other call sessions will be shared on the dedicated web portal open to IAFE members.

Education: One of the four pillars of the Association's strategic plan is to deliver industry leading educational programming to improve overall member experience and practical learning. That doesn't stop with a crisis, and in fact, magnifies the need for it. As an example, a scheduled online course for the Institute of Fair Management on Human Resources held on March 18 was adapted to include the COVID 19 pandemic impact on HR matters. An upcoming CyberSeminar on Active Assailants has been changed to one on emergency and pandemic planning to assist our members in completing or honing their plans for dealing with the crisis. The upcoming IFM Summit in May will be converted from a live event to a virtual one to ensure that the valuable training delivered through this program will not stop. All previously scheduled CyberSeminar events will continue, although some may be adapted for the topic.

I believe the strength of the Association at this point in time is that our foundation is built upon members sharing with one another to strengthen the industry. Our role at the Association office is to facilitate, utilizing every tool in our virtual toolbox; and to listen to the members in calls and online discussions; to share via social media the many ways fairs are serving their communities and coming up with innovative ideas to not only help their community (i.e. delivery of educational assets for kids stuck at home), but creating online auctions and judging of youth project animals.

The IAFE staff is prepared to transition to working from home within the next few days in response to anticipated "shelter-in-place" rules, but we are fully prepared to remain engaged with members in order to come out stronger on the other side of this.

Sincerely,



Marla J. Calico, CFE
President & CEO