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Art is everywhere in Michigan and has numerous forms of expression and as a society, the *Michigan Festivals and Events Association asks that we allow art to touch our senses as the theme for its 2015 Annual Calendar of Events Brochure*. Christopher John Hollis noted that "...Art is not an object, but a 'feeling' that has no recognizable form. Paintings, sculpture, music and dance are objects left behind after the artist has tried to give this 'feeling' structure." In allowing this feeling to develop and by using the five senses of celebration we encourage, initiate and facilitate an enriched artistic, cultural and creative environment in Michigan.

More than 35 million people attend Michigan Festivals and Events Association's member festivals, fairs, special events and attractions annually. These events provide the opportunity to celebrate our art, history, culture, harvests, heritage and Michigan's vast array of unique waterways. In many instances this may be an individual's only chance to experience art in their community: to touch a sculpture, view a painting or experience a performer. These experiences must be supported and preserved.

In order to support and preserve these experiences, Michigan artists and creators of culture need to be supported. Michigan Festivals and Events Association's educational programming provides the business and technical support that member organizations need so they are enabled to focus on their artistic and cultural presentations.

Organized in 1992, as a statewide non-profit organization, Michigan Festivals and Events Foundation, doing business as Michigan Festivals and Events Association (MFEA), was founded to support community volunteers throughout the State of Michigan and provide support to community organizations, civic groups and festival organizers to promote Michigan's tourism industry.

Part of MFEA's mission is to provide educational opportunities and to conduct philanthropic activities designed to benefit the arts in Michigan. It is through Michigan's festivals, fairs, special events and attractions that MFEA is able to support art and culture in the state. While the primary focus for MFEA is supporting arts and culture in Michigan, by extension of its mission it also provides education, support and training to festivals, fairs, special events and attractions that celebrate Michigan's ethnic diversity, maritime, industrial and agricultural heritage. Through its educational programming, MFEA has a strong community outreach and increases access to art in communities across the state.

MFEA members encourage communities to grow and prosper by attracting dollars in the form of tourism and in some cases; new industry. Organizations and communities have come to rely on the networking and exposure provided through the michiganfun.com website, brochures, annual directories and seasonal conferences developed by MFEA. An important element to any festival or event is a broad base of support by the community, businesses and volunteers. Because of MFEA's efforts to develop support from these entities; festivals and events that support local economies are made possible. According to the Americans for the Arts economic impact study, "the average resident event goer spends \$19.53 per day. The non-resident event goer spends \$40.19 per day. In addition, 37% of our membership reporting in 2010 contributed a total of 1,270,817 volunteer hours. Our gift back to the state...\$25,149,468.43."

While the volunteer hours and the monetary benefits to Michigan, localities, and MFEA's members are important, the intangibles are even more important. In this vast world where face-to-face interaction is becoming scarcer; communities, families and friends come together to celebrate their communities at these festivals, fairs, special events and attractions. These endeavors allow volunteers to donate their time, artists to showcase their talents and attendees to experience the new and unknown. The value of a community event in the heart of our families is immeasurable.

In order to accomplish its mission and goals, MFEA has set forth an ambitious and comprehensive set of programming and educational materials which are made available to members, community organizers and the general public.

Annually, MFEA produces and distributes over One Million Promotional Materials including the popular **Calendar of Events Brochures**; listing all member events, dates of the events and locations. While the brochure highlights and differentiates between the many different types of events, it makes special notations with regard to festivals, fairs, special events and attractions where the primary focus is the arts. The brochure remains one of the most sought after and comprehensive lists of Michigan festivals, fairs, special events and attractions. The Brochure can be found across the entire state and major distribution points include Michigan McDonald's Restaurants, Michigan AAA Branch Offices, Michigan Welcome Centers and the AMTRAK Chicago Union Station and many more locations. While MFEA will supply these brochures to any organization, business, and individuals requesting them. The Brochure is a primary tool which allows MFEA to communicate with the general public. Along with the Brochure, MFEA also produces and distributes a **Membership Directory and a Buyer's Guide**. The Membership Directory contains information about MFEA's members; while the Buyer's Guide contains information regarding vendor members; including, but not limited to entertainment, food and other product vendors, marketing and social media companies and other industry planners. All MFEA members receive a hard copy as well as a fully downloadable version of the Buyer's Guide and a downloadable version of the Membership Directory.

In order to extend its outreach, MFEA has partnered with the Detroit Media Group. April 2015 340,000 copies of the **Michigan Festivals and Events Tabloid** will be distributed within the **Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press** across the state promoting all MFEA festivals, fairs, events and attractions. Articles and stories relevant to the industry are also featured in the tabloid.

MFEA continues to feature its members and followers using Facebook, Twitter and an award winning website, www.michiganfun.com. On a daily basis, Facebook and Twitter update followers as to the events happening around the state of Michigan as well as provide further information regarding MFEA, its activities and its benefits. MFEA website www.michiganfun.com receives over a million hits every month. The website offers a complete listing of member festivals, events and vendors and remains a major resource for community members, tourists and Michigan families. As most members do not have the budget to develop and maintain their own web site, the MFEA web site remains a valuable tool and resource.

The popular **MFEA PARTY @ MI PLACE** state wide billboard campaign received the Gold Pinnacle Award for most creative marketing idea by the International Festivals and Events Association. To complement the billboard campaign, the **MFEA "Party @ MI Place" Radio Podcast** was launched on MichiganBusinessNetwork.com in January 2013. The podcast features six, six minute segments, and is recorded once a month...rebroadcasting weekly, several times a day. The show is a well-rounded state representation of industry experts and leaders from state legislators to event coordinators to vendors. Topics discussed range from economic impact to volunteerism.

In addition, MFEA hosts an **Annual Convention** in the fall of each year. The convention rotates its location around the state and attracts over 800 volunteers from across Michigan and many other states for a four day learning extravaganza presented by experts throughout the industry. An important element in the success of this convention is keeping convention registration affordable through sponsorships and donations for program support. **The 23rd MFEA Annual Convention, will be held at the Boyne Mountain Resort on November 5-8, 2015**, featuring over 24 Educational Workshops, Industry Trade Show, Entertainment Showcases and many Networking Opportunities. This year's educational presentations will include topics such as 10 Steps To Planning Your New Event, Grant Writing, Social Media, Email Marketing, Board Development, Security, and Financial Management by industry experts and many more. The convention is a collective learning environment which encompasses MFEA's mission where ideas are shared, visions formed and new levels achieved. The convention is the primary tool in which MFEA provides education to volunteers and event planners annually; a tool that is necessary for all volunteers and event planners to bring art and culture to all communities across the state.

In keeping with its educational mission, MFEA has developed the **ABC's of Event Planning**...also known as the **Event Gatekeepers' Guide (The EGG)**. The EGG currently consists of twelve educational chapters including: Volunteers & Customer Relations; Contracts & Licensing; Non-Profit Basics; Marketing & Branding; Sponsorships, Fundraising and Grant Writing; Administration; Risk Management & Security; Basic Logistics; Entertainment; Targeted Programming; Social Media; and Rules and Regulations with "Tips from the Trenches." Each MFEA member receives a downloadable copy. In addition, Lansing Community College has adopted the EGG as an educational tool and offers an on-line class entitled "Festival and Event Management." A course description notes that the class is designed to provide festival organizers, staff and volunteers with the information needed to stage a successful event and notes that the class will explore all aspects of creating and enhancing an event from volunteer management, marketing and sales, legal aspects and sponsorships.

In 2015 going above and beyond, MFEA will facilitate several events and productions: a Spring Educational Seminar Series (5 state wide locations), MFEA Signature On-line Auction, and a Royal Luncheon on the Capitol Lawn. As with all that MFEA seeks to do, these events and productions will educate and serve the events and their planners. Many communities and organizations have come to rely on the education and networking opportunities they receive through MFEA and MFEA remains a vital support organization.

The **Annual Spring Seminar Series** remains a core of MFEA's educational programs and professional development for its member community volunteer organizations that promote the arts through Michigan festivals, fairs, special events and attractions.

The **MFEA Signature On-line Auction** is a yearly fundraiser of the MFEA Foundation. All proceeds go to providing affordable educational opportunities for the industry and its volunteers.

"The Party @ MI Place" Royal Luncheon, scheduled June 17, 2015, on the Capitol Lawn is a celebration of Michigan's Kings and Queens, princes and princesses and their courts. The event, held on the capitol lawn allows children through young adults to dine with their state legislators. Royalty will present their art, communities and culture to the state legislators and in turn state legislators will be able to provide a civics lesson in government to the "royalty." In order to expand the outreach of this event and increase diversity, MFEA will invite the "royalty" of organizations across the state who are not members of MFEA, particularly those of ethnic minorities and urban centers, such as the queens of the American GI Forum and the many African American Festivals.

MFEA is a leader of the **Michigan Grown** movement and supporter of all things Michigan. Supporting Michigan grown foods as well as Michigan manufactured goods, MFEA provides the same education and supportive tools to farmer's markets, pumpkin patches and corn mazes. Many agricultural commodities are celebrated through our community festivals and fairs. Families enjoy celebrating cherries, apples, peaches, asparagus, corn, blueberries, beans, dairy, tulips and many more homegrown commodities, while enjoying a local event.

An important element to any festival, special event and attraction is a broad base of support by the community, businesses and volunteers. Because of MFEA's efforts to develop support from these entities, art and culture are brought to many families across the state, with communities receiving a return on their investment.

MFEA continues promoting arts and culture, access to arts and culture and Michigan festivals, fairs, special events and attractions in accordance with their mission statement. MFEA has developed comprehensive training guides, a broad community base and expertise that can be found nowhere else, all in an effort to support arts and culture in Michigan.

Not only does MFEA have a commitment to serve its members and followers, it also seeks to aid Michigan's underserved communities. In the upcoming year, MFEA will make a concerted effort to reach out to underserved communities including; but not limited to, urban, cultural and ethnic populations. MFEA believes that every community should have the support it needs to showcase itself, that every artist should have the opportunity to display their talent and that every person should be allowed to participate in special events. Using the Calendar of Events Brochure, MFEA monthly e-Newsletter and other tools, MFEA will extend itself to these special communities and aid in their planning of many successful events.

MFEA provides affordable membership opportunities to all communities across the state and anyone wishing to join should contact MFEA directly. Currently, MFEA has extended an offer to allow an entire community to join its organization for a low price. This Five in One (5 in 1) membership offer is made so that one event, one art studio, one art gallery, one museum and one library may join MFEA for only one hundred twenty-five (\$125.00) dollars. This membership opportunity will promote an entire community and emphasize the "*placemaking*" strength of a festival and its partners.

As always... "Thanks to volunteers like you, worthy causes are supported, important events take place, our communities are strengthened, and our lives are enriched. We thank you for caring...and doing!"

Ideas Shared...

Visions Formed

...A New Level!