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November 22, 2005

### IAFE's new partner center stage at show

By Mary Wade Burnside

At next week's International Assn. of Fairs and Expositions convention in Las Vegas, members will have the opportunity to learn more about the IAFE's new partnership with the Fair Network, the New York-based business that aims to help fairs find advertisers and sponsorships.

"There are others that have been doing the same thing they have, but (the Fair Network has) very good relationships with lots of advertising and sponsorship people in corporate America via their longtime presence on Madison Avenue," IAFE president Jim Tucker said.

Mary Ann Halford is president and CEO of the Fair Network.

"I got to know the fair marketplace," she said.

Members will get the chance to hear from Halford and her partner, Gerry Byrne, the former publisher of Hollywood trade show magazine Variety, during a session called "Fair Marketing Solutions: The Scalable Opportunity," from 3-4:45 p.m. on Monday.

"The panel will discuss wide-ranging topics about the changing media landscape, the new realities of marketing and how best to leverage opportunities available to fairs, locally, regionally and nationally," Halford said. "We'll give examples of successful brand marketing initiatives at state and county fairs and creating winning formulas for fairs and brands to work together."

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Essentially, the Fair Network will charge fairs to help bring in new advertising and sponsors that will work well with fairs. The IAFE will get a percentage of the fee, Tucker said.

"Fairs will get more sponsorship and more advertising, and we'll get some funds into this association that will help us do the education services to our members that we need to be doing," Tucker said. "That's our major role."

The Fair Network is looking at three revenue streams that would benefit fairs, Halford said. "One is creating national sponsorship packages and taking them into state and county fairs," she said. "It would create interesting interactions with potential customers, such as an interactive booth or sampling or a mixture of promotion and merchandise."

Second, the Fair Network's own book imprint would be used to create experiences at fairs, such as story villages. Several fairs in Florida and Texas already have plans to build activities around the 2006 release of Universal Pictures' "Curious George," Halford said.

"The third initiative will be how can we help fairs inventory new media platforms," Halford said. "How can we bring in things like digital signage and other vehicles that we can help them create and develop?"

Fairs, Halford noted, generally have done a good job in getting local advertising but could benefit from help with national businesses and sponsors. "When you look at a lot of fairs, they don't necessarily have the resources to do this," she said.

The Fair Network will be targeting companies such as Kraft and Procter & Gamble as well as a major media outlet, Halford said.

By working with the IAFE, Halford said, she will have better contact with the association's member fairs. "Jim Tucker provides us with ready access to fair committees and fair managers," said Halford, who noted that she also would be working with fairs to compile a database on fair audience demographics as well as sponsorship trends.

During the IAFE conference, which runs Monday through Dec. 1, attendees also will have the opportunity to hear from other speakers, such as Paul Moore of the William Morris Agency and Dave Snowden of Triangle Talent, who will discuss "Perceptions of the Fair Entertainment Business -- Real & Imagined; as well as the Pro Rodeo Cowboys Assn., which will present "The New PRCA."

Representatives from the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions also will be on hand to talk about "What Fairs Can Learn From Amusement Parks."

"I think we're on the cutting-edge of more things," Tucker said.

The Showmen's League of America was to hold its annual exhibitors' lounge Sunday and Monday, with an annual meeting Tuesday. The SLA banquet will be held that night, and the IAFE's Hall of Fame and Awards Banquet is to be held Nov. 30, separated for the second time in a row after being combined for a few years.

Tucker does worry that being on the Vegas Strip will be distracting to attendees. "We feel that we have a great challenge for the educational program, because the fun alternatives are right there at hand," he said. "But we think we've taken the educational programs to the next level this

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year.”

But Gary Goodman, the outgoing IAFE chairman, believes the program provides enough free time that attendees will not have trouble doing everything they want and going to sessions.

“We survived being on the Strip 10 years ago,” said Goodman, the general manager of the South Carolina State Fair in Columbia.


Gary McRae, the general manager of Western Fair in London, Ontario, will become the new IAFE chairman during the Dec. 1 business meeting.

Activities will be held at Paris and the adjoining Bally's, and attendance and trade show numbers appear to be ahead of last year's, Tucker said. Last year's attendance was about 5,000, and attendance was running 5%-7% ahead, he said. Steve Siever, the IAFE Trade Show manager, said the association was on track for 320 exhibitors in 410-415 booths, up from last year's 403.

“We have more free strolling attractions,” Siever said. “That's also a trend in buying, that you see more walk-around acts.”

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