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Marla Calico Named IAFE President & CEO

SPRINGFIELD, MO — The International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) is proud to announce Marla Calico as the new president and CEO of the organization. Ms. Calico will take over the position on Jan. 1, 2016, from outgoing President & CEO Jim Tucker.

“We are pleased and excited Marla is taking over for Jim. We did a very serious national search, conducted several interviews and are confident Marla is the correct person to take the reins of IAFE at this important time in history,” stated 2015 IAFE Chair John Sykes of the East Texas State Fair in Tyler. “There is no doubt she has the knowledge, professionalism and enthusiasm to move the IAFE to an even higher level.”

Ms. Calico joined the IAFE in 2006 as director of education and has served as chief operating officer since 2014. Prior to joining the IAFE professional staff, she served as general manager of the Ozark Empire Fair in Springfield, Mo. She earned her Certified Fair Executive designation in 1988 and in 2003 she served as chair of the IAFE. She was inducted into the IAFE Hall of Fame in 2012.

The process was led by a Search Committee consisting of the IAFE Executive Committee -- First Vice Chair and Chair of the Search Committee Kent Hojem of the Washington State Fair; IAFE Chair Sykes; Second Vice Chair Becky Brashear of the Maryland State Fair; Past Chair Marlene Pierson-Jolliffe of the State Fair of Virginia; and Past Chair Debbie Dreyfus-Schronk of the San Antonio Livestock Exposition -- and added 30-year fair veteran Jerry Hammer of the Minnesota State Fair and Young Professionals Initiative (YPI) Representative Jessica Underberg of the Erie County Fair (New York). Executive search firm Witt/Kieffer sought leaders from around the world to be considered for the position and presented them to the Search Committee.

According to Hojem, “It was exceedingly critical that an exhaustive search be undertaken for the new IAFE president and CEO. This organization and the fair industry in general will continue to face increasingly complex and diverse issues. The need to identify and engage the best individual to lead this organization into the future was always our primary focus. Marla represents those qualities we deem paramount to insure a successful future for our organization.”

Calico holds a Bachelor’s degree in Agri-Business from Missouri State University and throughout her long career at the Ozark Empire Fair served the Springfield community as a volunteer and/or board member of numerous civic organizations. She has been recognized as an Outstanding Young Alumni from Missouri State University and as one of *Springfield Business Journal’s* “Most Influential Women.”

“I’m honored to have been selected to serve the IAFE members as the next President and CEO and look forward to a bright future for the Association. We have a dedicated and seasoned staff who are excited to expand the use of technology to deliver education, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and enhance communication with our fantastic members around the globe,” said Calico. She also noted that among the top priorities for the Association in 2016 will be increased fundraising for the IAFE Education Foundation to support expanded educational programming, a series of “listening” sessions in various settings to get critical input from members on issues most important to them, as well as a focus on advocacy for agricultural fairs in governmental, media and corporate sectors.

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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.