

# Celebrating 20 years of the Florence Events Center

The Florence Events Center's (FEC) vision began with a group of citizens in 1986. Ten years later the vision became a reality in the form of a 21,600-square-foot structure.

Ground was broken on July 4, 1994. The original concept was for a multi-purpose space but it was later determined that a flat floor space alone would not meet the entire needs of the community. That is when the plans for a theater entered the picture.

In search for the optimal design, a group of event center enthusiasts made several trips to various facilities and — while in a café in Nevada — scribbled the first rough design on a piece of scratch paper, which is currently framed and displayed in the FEC office.

Through county room tax funds, foundation grants and fundraisers, the FEC was built for \$3.3 million.

The FEC was dedicated to the citizens of Florence whose vision and efforts made the community facility possible. The city was under the leadership of Mayor Roger McCorkle, Councilor Dave Braley, Councilor Clara Kuhn Anderson, Councilor Alan Burns, Councilor Eileen Gray and City Manager Ken Hobson.

At the beginning of the campaign, the original name of the facility was to be the "All Events Center" but was changed to the Florence Events Center during the construction period. In September 2000, the name was changed to the "Florence Convention and Performing Arts Center," with hopes the name would attract more conferences. A few years later by popular demand, the



name was changed back to the Florence Events Center, which it remains to this day.

There was a degree of risk for a small community to undertake a project of such magnitude. There were con-

By **KEVIN RHODES**  
FEC Director

cerns the building would sit vacant. Fortunately, business exceeded expectations and it was soon in need of more space. Through a generous donation from volunteer and FEC supporter George Weber, the Executive Board Room, Directors Office, Green Room and a storage room were all added to bring the total square footage to 22,500 feet.

The first FEC general manager, Joseph Kerr, was hired on Jan. 16, 1995. On his second day on the job at the opening of the bids, he learned the lowest proposal came in \$750,000 over budget. After the daunting challenge of making cuts to reduce the cost of construction and pursuing additional funding, the City of

Florence accepted a new bid five months later for \$2.4 million from local contractor G&C Construction.

Florence Events Center opened its doors and was dedicated on Aug. 31, 1996. To this day, the facility continues to remain full of activity and has grown to host an average of 400 events and 50,000 attendees per year. Staff projects approximately 7,800 events will have occurred and 800,000 attendees will have walked through the FEC doors by the end of 2016!

The Florence Events Center has undoubtedly proven to be a well utilized facility and wonderful gem for our community.

Happy Anniversary to the Florence Events Center! We enthusiastically look forward to another successful 20 years.

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### FLORENCE EVENTS CENTER 2016 COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

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In this celebration of the Florence Events Center's 20 years on the Oregon coast, find the history of bringing a community space to Florence, learn about current projects, meet the staff and peek inside.

Keep an eye out for special "Community Spotlights," highlighting 20 groups and individuals that help make sure "There's always something happening at the Florence Events Center."

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