



FLORENCE EVENTS CENTER THROUGH THE YEARS

In the past 25 years, the Florence Events Center has hosted thousands of memorable events, including the Rhododendron Festival Coronation of Queen Rhododendra and the King of the Coast, FACE's Winter Music Festival, Florence Festival of Books, SEAcost Entertainment Association's concert series, art fairs, live theater, dance shows, flower sales, City of Florence meetings and events, conferences, gallery shows, holiday gatherings, scholarships, trainings, vaccination clinics, expos, award ceremonies, Florence Community PTA's Talent Show, weddings, celebrations of life, anniversaries, classes, Florence Area Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours, town halls, community meetings and so much more.



FLORENCE EVENT CENTER'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Florence Events Center's vision began with a group of Florence citizens in 1986. Ten years later in 1996, the vision became a reality in the form of a 21,600 square foot structure. Ground was broken on July 29, 1995.

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 all-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.

The event center eventually,

through room tax funds, foundation grants and fundraisers, was built for \$3.3 million.

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 once again 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 remains to this day!

There was degree of risk for a small community to undertake a project of such magnitude. There were concerns the building would sit vacant. Fortunately, business exceeded expectations and the FEC 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, bringing 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 in order to reduce the cost of construction and pursuing additional funding, the City of Florence had accepted a new bid five months later for \$2.4 million from local contractor, G&C Construction.

Kevin Rhodes joined the staff as operations manager

on July 22, 1996. He oversaw the opening of the center, receiving pages of projects that needed to be completed prior to the ribbon cutting.

The Florence Events Center officially opened its doors and was dedicated on Aug. 31, 1996.

That first year saw 303 events at the events center, which has continued to expand its offerings over the past 20+ years. 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.

"By the end of 2020, we hosted over 9,000 events, with just short of a million attendees coming through our doors since our grand opening," said Rhodes, who became the FEC director in 2002. "The FEC as we know it exceeded all expect-

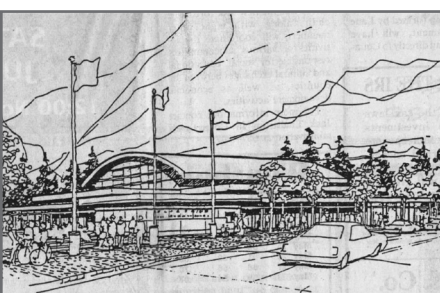
tations and has become an integral part of our community."

Rhodes retired from the role of director at the end of December 2020. A dedicated staff has remained on board throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and volunteer opportunities are popping up. In addition, local nonprofit FACE (Florence Arts, Culture & Entertainment), which used to be the Friends of the Florence Events Center, is becoming more active.

The FEC is preparing for the next round of conferences, events, concerts, meetings, weddings, celebrations of life and whatever else Florence needs from its "all-events center."

For more information, stop by 715 Quince St., visit eventcenter.org or call 541-997-1994.

1991



The first drawings of the **Florence Events Center** are submitted to the Florence City Council and the All Events Center Committee for approval. The preliminary architectural drawings and a preliminary project cost estimate came from the project's architect, Richard P. Turi.

1993



The **Last Resort Players** established with the Florence Performing and Fine Arts Festival, performing "Loggers Lament".

The group was able to contribute \$5,000 toward the building of the Florence Events Center.

1994

Green Light For All-Events Center
— *The Siuslaw News*
November 16, 1994

The ink on the final plans is drying, the plans are almost ready to go out and, with luck, construction will start early in the new year. The all-events center project is finally at the point where the long-time wish for a performing arts and convention center in Florence will become a reality.

"We're done, we're ready," architect Richard Turi said when he told the Florence City Council about the plans for the center.

Councilors voted unanimously to authorize the architect and the city to finalize the plans and start the construction bidding process. The vote was greeted with applause from the audience of planning and advisory committee members and residents.

"This is something that's been going on for almost a decade at this point," Mayor Roger McCorkle said about the planning and campaigning for the all-events center.



1996



First dreamt of in the late '80s, the **Florence Events Center**, 715 Quince St., became a reality in the early '90s and was introduced to Florence under the name "All Events Center" with the following slogan, "All Events Center — We All Need Our Place!"

The FEC Grand Opening was on Aug. 31, 1996.

The FEC was dedicated to the citizens of Florence whose vision and

efforts made the community facility possible.

During the opening, **Last Resort Players** performed "The Music Man."

The FEC is a 21,000-square-foot convention and performing arts center. The building consists of a 455-seat proscenium theater, 8,000 square feet of meeting space, state-of-the-art technology and a professionally equipped kitchen.



Area residents joined the coordinating committee in supporting the FEC through a brick campaign and fundraising efforts.



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