

Ways Festival and Event Professionals Can Positively Contribute and Give Back During – And After – The Pandemic

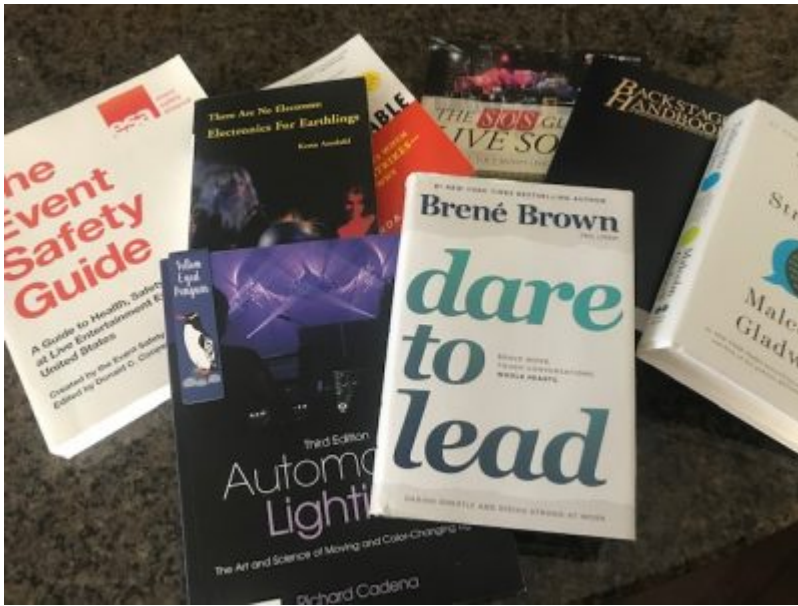
Back in March when the pandemic was just starting, like many in the event and festival industries, I suddenly found virtually all of my projects ground to a halt.

And while it was painful, confusing, and scary to deal with so much loss so quickly, after taking some time to process it all (mainly, staying in bed afraid to look at more cancellation emails & texts), I decided to finally use this newfound free time to focus on various goals I've only half-heartedly attempted before (and often used the "I'm too busy, gotta focus on the next gig" excuse to fully see them through).

I took this time to evaluate not only my professional and personal goals, but also my purpose, my values, and my boundaries. How would I want to emerge from this? How can I improve myself now in order to better serve others when we're back – both my event teams as well as those in need? How can I best maintain an others-focused, grateful, compassionate mentality when everything around me seems to be falling apart?

First, I implemented daily habits of meditating, journaling, exercising, and improving my Spanish (*Siempre quise hablar con fluidez!*). Next, I picked up several different books (both new and ones that I admittedly started months ago) and I joined a book club with some colleagues (*a good list of books to read [can be found here](#)*). And in April, I started to

research where I might be able to give back & help others – safely, with COVID measures in place.



Examples of some recommended books

And as a result, **I've discovered some excellent ways to volunteer and help others** – and some even have festival and event elements to them. I imagine variations of these are available in most cities around the country as well:

- Your local food bank. Here in Austin, with the [Central Texas Food Bank](#) you can pick from sorting food inside their massive warehouse, or distributing food via a drive through setup at their mobile pantries. Both are wonderful experiences but I tend to prefer the mobile pantries, as they are closer to mini-events (complete with 2 way radios and high viz) plus you get to directly (but with social distancing) interact with people who need food.



Volunteering at a mobile pantry for the Central Texas Food Bank

- [Habitat for Humanity](#). You can work either at a job site building a home or at their ReStore retail outlet stocking shelves. The site leaders are very patient with those new to home construction and will guide you on how to use all power tools and other gear.



Hanging up siding at a HFH house in Austin

- Donate blood or plasma. The need for this, especially if you're a universal donor, is more than ever. Here in Austin, [We Are Blood](#) ensures you are comfortable the entire time.



Giving blood in Austin at We Are Blood

- Homeless organizations. In Austin, we have [The Other Ones](#) who help provide our homeless neighbors with paying jobs, showers, food, case workers, and much more. You can help at their front desk or outside checking people in who want a shower.



Manning the front desk at The Other Ones' headquarters at Camp Esperanza in Austin

- Voting / polling help. Most of these are actually paid roles, and the need for help at the polls this year is at a crucial level. Visit [Power the Polls](#) to sign up. I

plan to work for a local polling station on Election Day.

- Various Live Event organizations trying to secure funding. This includes national groups like [NIVA](#) / [#SaveOurStages](#), [#WeMakeEvents](#), and local groups in Austin like the [Amplified Sound Coalition](#). Being present at rallies, group discussions, and other safe gatherings will help our lawmakers see just how many people are affected and how passionate we are about ensuring our way of life is kept alive.



[ILIOS Productions](#) in Austin, one of the many vendors participating in #RedAlertRestart for #WeMakeEvents on September 1st, 2020

Mike Speaks At ASC's "Load Out", a Discussion on Mental Health For Our Industry

I can tell that participating in these important programs **have helped me as much as I've helped others**; it feels so good – and normal – to be useful, part of a team, and seeing the positive impact immediately. It's done wonders to keep my mental health strong when it's easy to get discouraged the longer this pandemic wears on. If you have the time and ability, I highly encourage you look into your local charities to see how you can help.



Working a Tito's Hand Sanitizer giveaway in Texas

There may even be paid opportunities to help others impacted by the pandemic, such as the role I had helping distribute tens of thousands of hand sanitizer bottles through [Tito's](#) throughout Texas this past summer or the polling work described above.

And once our industry bounces back, my goal will be to continue helping with non-profit organizations such as these – by more fully integrating these acts of service with my event & festival teams or by dedicating more of my energy and presence to these causes through more efficient scheduling and time management.

If you have any questions about volunteering for any of these organizations, or if you have other organizations you wish to highlight, please reach out to me at mike@festivalandeventproduction.com!

Thank you for reading, and to close, here's a quote that's become my new mantra:

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” – Leo Rosten

FEP's 2020 Production Workshop – Registration Closed

Update – June 22nd:

THANK YOU to everyone who participated in our first Workshops! We are in the process of going through everyone's feedback and determining when and where the next Workshops will be held.

When registration is open again, we will update this page.
We can't wait to do this again!



Our inaugural workshop class



Learning how to tie rigging knots



Learning how to power up / down a generator

While we all patiently wait out our moment to return to festivals and events, I thought this would be a good time to come together and utilize our collective experiences and resources to ***create a set of hands-on (but socially distant) tutorial sessions*** for local event professionals.

The result is our first **Production Workshop – running for 2 days on June 8th and 9th at Soundcheck’s Warehouse (1901 E 51st St, Austin TX 78723).**

UPDATE: The first Workshop is now full; however, please apply if you’re still interested as we will put you on a wait list, and if there is enough demand, will open up a second Workshop, to be held June 15-16 also at Soundcheck Austin.



Rehearsal Room A – Where the majority of Sessions will take place

Here's how it will work:

- Registration is just \$30/day, all of which goes to cover the cost of the venue rental (we received a generous discount – thank you, Soundcheck!). There will be opportunities to donate/tip your teachers via online payments if you feel like you really enjoyed your session(s).
- There will be 3 groups of 4 people each. These small groups will help encourage more interaction and hands-on learning.
- We will be following the State of Texas' guidelines for being around each other during these times, which will include the following from all attendees:
 - Capacity of all rooms must remain at 25% or less
 - Everyone must wear a mask
 - Everyone will practice social distancing and keep 6 feet apart from each other
 - Where applicable, gloves will be provided so you all can touch gear
 - Gear will be wiped down / sanitized between sessions
 - Be prepared for a temperature check when you

arrive each day

- During longer breaks, we will require everyone to leave the main space so we can properly ventilate it
- Bathrooms will be limited to 1 or 2 persons at a time (Soundcheck will make the final call here).
- Extra hand sanitizer will be made available
- **The 2-hour Sessions start at 9am each day – 4 sessions each day in total, so expect your total time at the Workshop to last from approx 9am to 7pm (Monday June 15th and Tuesday, June 16th), and will consist of:**
 - Day 1 – Audio – provided by Miller Pro Audio
 - Day 1 – Lighting – provided by ILIOS Productions
 - Day 1 – *1 Hour Lunch Break Offsite*
 - Day 1- Backline – provided by Soundcheck
 - Day 1 – Video/LED – provided by ILIOS Productions
 - Day 2 – Event and Crowd Safety / COVID Updates – provided by Code4
 - Day 2 – Rigging/Labor – provided by JTP
 - Day 2 – *1 hour Lunch Break Offsite*
 - Day 2 – Power – provided by Event Power
 - Day 2 – Leadership / Full Team Q&A – provided by Mike Hanley and others
- The focus of these sessions are to empower you to understand what it takes for each element (i.e., audio, lighting) to load in, load out, advance, and execute their jobs day of show. You'll see why they need the time and personnel they need to do their jobs properly, and you'll likely be able to save yourself (and your clients) time and money when asking for future quotes because you can better plan for what you both need from each other.
- Everyone who is selected to attend will also receive a session curriculum with suggested (but not mandatory) reading, a glossary of key terms, and other details.
- Afterward, I request that everyone provides us with feedback so we can look to improve for future

workshops.

And a huge THANK YOU to all of our participating companies:

SOUND CHECK
AUSTIN

Miller Pro AVL

ILIOS

Event Power

CODE 4

ॐ JAMES THOMAS
PRODUCTIONS
EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Quarantined? Here Are Some Ways to Expand Your Event and Festival Knowledge While You Wait It Out

While we all safely shelter-in-place during this pandemic, here is a list of ways you can enrich your understanding of various aspects of event and festival production, management, and safety.

I have personally read all of the books listed below (with the exception of the Risk and Hazard Mgmt book and the Video Production book; I will do that soon) and while some are a bit old, they all have good lessons that can still be applied today. Anyone that is a manager (or wishes to be one), I highly recommend you start with Dare to Lead, then look at setting up surveys for your team from the Appreciation and Tendencies books to help you better understand how to lead them (and for your team to interact with each other).

Below the books are some other resources, including podcasts, webinars, and e-magazines that I've found to be helpful. The Event Safety Alliance, in particular, is full of wonderful information – and now is the perfect time to catch up on the latest in safety procedures.

And finally, there's a small list of video tutorials / examples – I highly recommend you watch the crowd surge videos; it will help you see just how powerful and hazardous a surge can be in a large crowd. Note how they curved the pit barricade to help diffuse any surges rather than have it be a


straight line (good thinking on their part).

I'll keep updating the links below as I find new books / resources / videos. And while most of the links below are to Amazon, remember that there are also websites like <https://bookshop.org> which pledge to give a percentage of their sales back to your local bookstores.

- **Event and Festival Reading**

- **General Festival / Event / Career Related**

- [ESA's Guide to Reopening](#) – just released on May 11, 2020, “The *Reopening Guide* addresses health and sanitary issues that event and venue professionals need to consider in order to protect both patrons and workers. Since there is still insufficient testing, no contact tracing, and no vaccine against COVID-19, this guidance is particularly detailed. The first edition is tailored to be especially useful for event professionals reopening the smallest events with the fewest resources available to mitigate their risks, since in every municipal reopening plan these will be allowed to reopen first.”

-  [Creating Enduring Festivals](#)
 - [Event Entertainment and Production](#)
 - [Festival and Events Management \(International Focus\) –](#)
 - this is a UK textbook that takes an international approach to explaining festival and event management, with several interesting case studies.
 - [Backstage Handbook](#) – an “illustrated almanac of technical information”, this book is essential for any theater stage manager, and

is quite useful for concert stage managers as well. Includes sections on knot tying, pictures of stage related tools, shop math, and much more.

- [This Business of Concert Promotion and Touring](#) – this book is compact but full of pertinent information on how to best set up a concert and tour, both from the artist side and the promoter / venue side.
- [The Realist's Guide to a Successful Music Career](#)
– co-written by Joel Cummins from the successful band Umphrey's McGee, this is a fantastic resource that dives into all aspects of what life is like as an emerging, then touring, musician.

▪ **Leadership Related**




- [Dare to Lead](#)
– if you read one book from this list, make it this one. A “greatest hits” of sorts from Brené’s previous works, this book is valuable for anyone who’s looking for courageous, empathetic, vulnerable, compassionate leadership goals.
[The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace](#)
– one of two tests I give many of my staff; it helps understand what they best respond to so you can focus your energy in ways that work best for both of you.
- [The Four Tendencies](#) – the second of two tests I give many of my staff; this helps understand how your staff will react to

internal and external influences, and how to work best with each type of tendency.


- [Talking to Strangers – What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know](#) – this is a compelling, important read (complete with fascinating case studies) that dives into “an exploration of what goes wrong when we talk to strangers...and how to make those conversations go right.”
- [Creating and Motivating A Superior, Loyal Staff](#)
- [Essentials of Negotiation](#)
- [Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership](#)
- [On Emotional Intelligence](#)

▪ **Production Related**

▪ **Audio**

-  [The Ultimate Live Sound Operator's Handbook](#) – very thorough yet easy to read; also features a DVD to help educate on various sound reinforcement examples, frequencies, and so on.
- [Sound Reinforcement Handbook](#)
- [The SOS Guide to Live Sound](#)

▪ **Lighting**

-  [Concert Lighting \(3rd Edition\) – Moody](#)
– this book (now in its 4th edition), is a comprehensive look at not just lighting but also all aspects of tour life / production.
- [The Automated Lighting Programmer's Handbook](#)
- [Automated Lighting – Cadena](#)
- [A Practical Guide to Stage Lighting](#)

- **Video**

- [Video Production Handbook](#)

- **Rigging**




- [Entertainment Rigging for the 21st Century](#)

– of all rigging books, this one does the best job explaining not just the usual rigging you see on arena gigs, but also aerialist rigging, counterweight rigging, and other niche forms of suspending people or equipment in the air. It also has rigging math examples and problems to solve.

- [The Arena Riggers Handbook](#)

- **Electricity**


- [Electricity for the Entertainment Electrician and Technician](#) – one of the best (and, truthfully, only) books that focus on power needs for events; this book helps demystify what electricity is, how it's applied in the events world, and how to best utilize it.

-  [There Are No Electrons: Electronics for Earthlings](#) – this quirky yet entertaining book helps shed light on the mysteries surrounding electricity. You'll learn to know and love the "Greenies" who want nothing more than to party.

▪ Safety Related

- [The Unthinkable – Who Survives When Disaster Strikes](#)

– the case studies in this book will change how you think about disaster planning / human nature forever. Most compelling for me was the story about the security director for Morgan Stanley that, by nature of adjusting to normal human biases and behavior in disasters, was able to train his company's 2,000+ staff to virtually all survive the 9/11 attacks at the WTC. This book is invaluable for anyone in a leadership role at events and festivals.

-  [The Event Safety Guide](#)– this fantastic compilation of event safety protocols and best practices is long overdue. Rather than be a how-to book for beginners, this book is designed for on-site use at an event, where you can quickly find elements that pertain to your situation and utilize the information accordingly.

- [Risk and Hazard Management for Festival and Events](#)

- [The Crowd Magazine – Crowd Safety Training](#)

- [OSHA Training – 10 Hour Online Course](#)

- [OSHA Training – 30 Hour Online Course](#)

Note – there are multiple providers of OSHA training; this is just one option. The 10 Hour is more for entry-level folks while the 30 Hour is for anyone in a supervisor / managerial role.

- [WHO – Training – Public Health Preparedness for Mass Gatherings](#)

Developed for public sector entities, there is still a lot of useful information for

anyone involved in planning mass gatherings in this free online training course.

- [Mental Health First Aid](#) – a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues.

▪ **Podcasts / Streams / Channels**

- [FestForums COVID-19 Coverage for Events and Festivals](#) (Re-Occurring, Wednesdays at various times)
- [Backstage Productions Inc – Town Hall update on COVID-19 and our Industry- The Show Must Go On](#)
- [Event Safety Alliance Podcast](#)
with over 15 episodes in, these podcasts run the range of rigging explanations, to safer environments for crowds, to how to manage during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Intelligent Crowd Solutions Webinars](#)
- [Show Makers Symposium](#) – “I’m With the Crew” Weekly Webinar; includes many thoughtful episodes that focus on mental health.
- [How to Monetize Virtual Events Webinar](#)
- [Tour Mgmt](#) – a series of 101 / beginner videos about tour management, including travel, day of show, budgeting, and more.
- [Concert Business Basics](#) – hosted by Jen Kellogg, a series of virtual workshops. Topics will include: Routing, Tour Budgets, Deal Structures, Settlement, Venues, People and Roles, Ancillary Revenue Streams and more.
- [Music Minds](#) – a music industry hub for educational content and resources. They have done a great job organizing all of the webinars, virtual meetings, and such using a calendar layout.

▪ **Tutorial Videos**

- How to Coil a Cable

- Crowd Surge Example – Oasis Concert
- Crowd Surge Example 2
- Crowd Control Top 5 Videos
- Radio Etiquette – Film Production Focused
- Radio Etiquette – Funny Take On It