



PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT • JANUARY THROUGH MAY 2018 • DHICKOK@EXPLOREFAIRBANKS.COM

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Explore Fairbanks launches Aurora and Midnight Sun Tracker On January 24 during the Fairbanks Interior Tourism Conference, Explore Fairbanks unveiled the Aurora and Midnight Sun Tracker as an addition to the Explore Fairbanks website. The Aurora Tracker gives real-time and three-day forecasts of northern lights data correlated to six different locations. The Midnight Sun Tracker calculates the number of daylight hours any time of year for three different locations. This mechanism is a one-of-a-kind digital invention created to help aid travelers in the Fairbanks region. To access the Aurora and Midnight Sun Tracker, visit the home page of www.explorefairbanks.com which is compatible with all devices including smartphones, tablets and desktops. For more information, contact Communications Director Amy Geiger at ageiger@explorefairbanks.com

Explore Fairbanks signs a contract with China-based East West Marketing Corp. on May 24 at the Grand Hyatt Beijing at Oriental Plaza, Beijing, China. The firm will represent Explore Fairbanks in the rapidly growing China to Alaska outbound tourism market. The contract was finalized during Governor Bill Walker's "Opportunity Alaska" China Trade Mission from May 19-30. Explore Fairbanks President and CEO Deb Hickok was a participant. Among East West's services for Explore Fairbanks will be to conduct sales calls and develop travel trade relations in China's major cities, coordinate tourism sales missions for Explore Fairbanks and Alaska visitor industry partners, provide airline development support, assist with planning familiarization tours for China-based travel trade and media to come to Fairbanks, and conduct marketing campaigns through China social media channels. Explore Fairbanks is the first destination marketing organization in Alaska to have travel trade representation in the China market. For more information, contact Tourism Director Scott McCrea at smccrea@explorefairbanks.com



Present at the contract signing were (forefront from left) Zhenzhen Tan, public relations manager, East West Marketing; Bill Walker, Governor, State of Alaska, and Deb Hickok, President and CEO, Explore Fairbanks. Also present were (standing from left) Bernie Karl, co-owner, Chena Hot Springs Resort; Adriel Butler, owner of Borealis Basecamp and member of the Explore Fairbanks Board of Directors; Connie Parks-Karl, co-owner, Chena Hot Springs Resort; Juliet Shepherd, technology led development project manager, Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation; Jeff Roach, manager, Fairbanks International Airport; and Jin Chen, chief operating officer, Alaska Skylar Travel.



The 2nd phase of a convention and performing arts center (CPAC) feasibility study begins
 Explore Fairbanks has contracted with Johnson Consulting Group to prepare a financial plan and management/operating plan and budget for a proposed convention and performing arts center in downtown Fairbanks. Johnson Consulting in partnership with Ascent, Bettisworth North, LMN Architects and JMB Consulting Group is conducting the study. Collectively, the team brings many years of experience working on hundreds of similar assignments. Since 2008, Explore Fairbanks has collaborated with the Fairbanks Arts Association in this CPAC project. For more information and for the Phase 1 Report, contact Meetings and Conventions Director Helen Renfrew at hrenfrew@explorefairbanks.com

Explore Fairbanks acknowledges the contributions of partners and other individuals and organizations for their support of the local visitor industry at the 2018 Annual Awards Banquet on April 20 at Birch Hill Recreation Area and Cross Country Ski Center. Emceed by Board Chair Andy Anger, awards were presented as follows: Golden Heart Award to Bob Eley, for his exceptional hospitality, commitment and effort to Fairbanks' visitors; Aurora Award to the Alaska Railroad, for its contributions to the development of the Fairbanks visitor industry; Jim and Mary Binkley Award to Sean Kurdziolek Portraits and Gallery, for their creation, innovation, courage and entrepreneurialism in the introduction of a new product; and the Raven Award to Midnight Sun Run, for promoting a distinct local, statewide, national and international interest and awareness among prospective visitors. In honor of its 40th Anniversary in 2017, Explore Fairbanks established the Fairbanks Tourism Hall of Fame to recognize outstanding individuals who have made iconic and significant contributions to the tourism industry in the Fairbanks region through their lifetime of leadership, passion and dedication. This year's inductee was Ed Peebles. Hilda MacDonald was recognized as the Golden Heart Greeter of the Year Award for dedicating herself to helping make a visitor's experience special and memorable. Staff service awards included Julia Parzick for five years of service and Angie Cerny for 10 years of service. For more information on partnership opportunities with Explore Fairbanks, contact Visitor Services and Partnership Director Charity Gadapee at cgadapee@explorefairbanks.com



The Golden Heart Gala honors Golden Heart Greeters and Meeting Ambassadors at a banquet on February 7. Explore Fairbanks recognized 22 Greeter volunteers who collectively donated 967 hours of volunteer service at various community events and meetings held in Fairbanks during 2017. The Golden Heart Greeter of the Year was Hilda MacDonald. Former Greeter of the Year Janette Hanneman received a pin for her 750 cumulative volunteer hours. Also honored were 42 Golden Heart Meeting Ambassadors whose Fairbanks-based conferences contributed more than \$2.9 million in estimated direct attendee (EDA) spending into the local economy in 2017. University of Alaska Fairbanks representatives Larry Hinzman, Marie Olesen, Cassie Pinkel, Mimi Lesniak and Carla Browning were Meeting Ambassadors of the Year for spearheading the Week of Arctic bringing \$1 million EDA. On hand to commend the awardees were Mayor Karl Kassel, Fairbanks North Star Borough; Mayor Jim Matherly, City of Fairbanks; Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly Members Kathryn Dodge and Angela Major; Fairbanks City Council Member Valerie Therrien; and Trina Bailey representing U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski's Fairbanks Office.



The 16th Fairbanks Visitor Industry Walk for Charity raises money for local nonprofits Held on Friday, May 11, the 508 walkers raised \$15,512. All proceeds were distributed to the 49 designated 501(c)(3) charities. Since inception in 2001, the Fairbanks-area Walk for Charity events have generated a total of \$367,520 for local non-profit organizations. The event was coordinated by Explore Fairbanks and the Fairbanks Chapter of the Alaska Travel Industry Association with generous donations from Fountainhead Hotels, Northern Alaska Tour Company and The Pump House Restaurant. Walkers strolled through downtown while sampling treats donated from 18 food and beverage vendors before finishing at the Celebration Station



inside the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center to enjoy desserts. Participants were eligible to win one of the 55 door prizes, which included trips to the Arctic Circle, rail passes, and overnight stays.



The Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center (MTCVC) celebrates 10 years After more than nine years of planning, Explore Fairbanks opened for business at the MTCVC on September 26, 2008. In the past decade, the partners of the MTCVC have worked – and continue to work – hard to collaborate and to ensure that each partner succeeds. Inspired by the life and contributions of Morris Thompson, the MTCVC combines the resources and missions of these organizations to serve visitors and area residents alike. The MTCVC provides an important educational link so community members and visitors can live and breathe the Interior's history and culture. As envisioned, the center has also become a community gathering place, where diverse cultures come together to learn to understand, appreciate and respect one another. The MTCVC offers the region, the state and the nation a prototype for synergistic collaboration to establish a well-considered cultural and visitors center. The building is home to six partners: Alaska Public Lands Information Center (APLIC), a consortium of federal and state land management agencies, managed by the National Park Service at the MTCVC; Alaska Geographic, a nonprofit bookstore, publisher, educator, and supporter of

Alaska's parks, forests, and refuges, functioning in tandem with APLICs across the state; Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Cultural Program, TCC is the traditional tribal consortium for the 42 tribes and villages of Interior Alaska; Denakkanaaga, the elders' organization recognized as the regional voice for Alaska Native elders in the Doyon and Tanana Chiefs region; and Explore Fairbanks, the destination marketing and management organization for the region. All five organizations are non-profit corporations in Alaska. The partnership created the sixth nonprofit under this roof, the 501(c)(3) MTCVC organization which owns and operates the facility. The MTCVC is governed by a 10-member Board of Directors. To learn more about the center or to contribute to its programs, contact MTCVC Executive Director Sara Harriger at sara@morrithompsoncenter.org. During the summer, the center is open daily from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Where in the world is Explore Fairbanks? The team works fast and furiously to spread the word about the Fairbanks region as a visitor destination. Here's some highlights from January through June:

EF Team	Where	What	Who
Communications	Las Vegas, NV	Alaska Media Road Show	22 domestic media
Communications	Local	Media Tour	1 domestic media
VSPD*	Local	Interior Tourism Conference	74 local tourism businesses
VSPD	Local	Visitor Industry Job Fair	64 job seekers
VSPD	Local	Eielson AFB Right Start Information Fair	30 attendees
Tourism	Salt Lake City, UT	Go West Summit	49 domestic and international tour operators
Tourism	Charlotte, NC	American Bus Association	26 domestic motorcoach and tour operators
Tourism Contractor	Austria	Visit USA Seminar	20 international travel trade
Tourism Contractor	Iceland	Iceland Air's Mid Atlantic Trade Show	18 international travel trade
Tourism Contractor	Switzerland	Visit USA Seminar and sales calls	28 international travel trade
Communications	Local	Media Tours	4 domestic media
VSPD	Local	Eielson AFB Right Start Information Fair	36 attendees
Communications	Local	Media Tours	9 media (1 international and 8 domestic)
Tourism	Local	Familiarization Tour	1 tour with 10 participants
Tourism Contractor	Denmark	USA Travel Show	Approx. 250 international travel trade
Tourism Contractor	Europe	ITB Berlin	60 international travel trade and media
Tourism	Atlanta, GA	NAJ Active America China	28 international travel trade
VSPD	Local	Eielson AFB Right Start Information Fair	30 attendees
Communications	Local	Media Tours	2 media (1 international and 1 domestic)
M&C**	Anchorage	Meeting Planner Lunch and sales calls	43 planners
Tourism	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Cruise360	Approx. 200 travel agents
Tourism	Japan and Korea	Alaska Sales Mission coordinated by Explore Fairbanks	Approx. 160 international travel trade, airline and media
Tourism Contractor	Germany	Visit USA Seminars	150 international travel trade
Tourism	Denver, CO	IPW	74 international travel trade
Communications	Denver, CO	IPW	26 domestic and international media
Communications	Local	Media Tours	1 domestic media
Administration	China	Opportunity Alaska Trade Mission	Approx. 90 international travel trade and media
Communications	Branson, MO	North American Travel Journalists Assn	20 domestic media

* Visitor Services and Partnership Development

** Meetings and Conventions



Looking Back: 2017 was another record-breaking year for Fairbanks tourism industry as shown by the below indicators. To access the *Explore Fairbanks Annual Report for 2017*, go to <https://www.explorefairbanks.com/about-explore-fairbanks/what-we-do/annual-report/>.

- Fairbanks had three consecutive record-breaking years of hotel/motel tax collections. The total hotel/motel tax collections (combined total of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, including the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole) in 2015 were more than a 5% increase over 2014; and 2016 was nearly a 9% increase over 2015. The year 2016 broke the \$5 million mark in collections for the first time. In 2017, collections continued to grow with a nearly 3% (2.8%) increase over 2016.
- Airport arrivals and departures steadily grew with the Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) reporting a 3% increase in 2017 deplanements over 2016 and a 2% increase in enplanements. In both categories, there has been a 17% growth since 2012.