

The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Fall 2010

Inside this issue

President Dee Dee Kay writes about the efforts of the Mat-Su CVB staff in promoting and marketing the entire Mat-Su Valley.

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Mat-Su Borough Assembly candidates provided answers to tourism-related topics and CVB issues prior to the October election.

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What's going on with your fellow Mat-Su CVB members? Find out who is doing what in "From the Membership."

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Mat-Su CVB members Liz Hejl, Diane Rose and Matt Keller attended the 2009 Annual Meeting at the Grand View Inn.

Voice of the Membership meeting set for Nov. 19

The 2010 "Voice of the Membership" meeting is being held in conjunction with the annual Mat-Su CVB Awards Luncheon and business seminar on Nov. 19 at Evangelo's in Wasilla.

The annual meeting is important for Mat-Su CVB members because it's an opportunity to meet the newly elected board members, voice their issues for discussion among the membership and hear about the direction the CVB is taking in the upcoming year.

Members are encouraged to provide their concerns, ideas or recommendations to the board, either verbally or through written comments turned in prior to the meeting. Mat-Su CVB members can bring forward formal policy changes through resolutions for the membership's consideration.

Submitted resolutions should be relevant to Mat-Su CVB on a broad

Nominations needed for board members

The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors will have three open seats this fall, and nominations are being accepted for candidates to fill the positions.

Directors serve three-year terms, and are instrumental in helping shape the organization's vision and mission. The top three vote-getters in the October elections will fill the positions on the board.

The three seats are currently held by Wes Tegeler of Tegeler and Associates, Jason Votruba of Deshka Landing Outdoor Association, and Cheryl Metiva of Northern Experience.

"This is an important time for

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**2009-2010
Mat-Su CVB
Board of Directors**

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Note: The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors consists of 10 members. Directors serve three-year terms on the board. Up for election this fall are the seats of Cheryl Metiva, Wes Tegeler and Jason Votruba.

From the president's desk

CVB staff works to promote Mat-Su as a premier destination

I don't know about you but I can't believe it is already September. Every year it seems like the summer goes by more quickly. I always have such grand plans about all the marketing and researching and web upgrades I am going to do and before I know it September is here – the season is over and I am in the midst of planning for the next year.

That is where I call in my "dream team" – yes that is the Mat-Su CVB staff. While I am diligently trying to make sure that I fill hotel rooms for this year, they are diligently researching options for the coming years.

While I am dreaming about Web site updates and how to run specials for those slow days, they are actively giving me resources to do just that with the great tools on Mat-Su Web site, www.alaskavisit.com.

While I am wondering how I will ever get that perfect shot for my brochure, they are scheduling and rescheduling and rescheduling photo shoots (and even finding pilots at midnight) to get those perfect shots for our visitors guide and Web site. And yes, those photos do help sell every product in the Mat Su.

While I am smiling at the guests that are visiting this summer, my "dream team" is out promoting the

entire Mat-Su with site inspections and travel writers for the coming season. This summer my "dream team" helped more than 10 travel writers and more than 25 tour operators/agents experience all the Mat-Su has to offer.

Sometimes in the middle of my busy season, I forget that I have

this "marketing machine" working toward the future of my business. They go about their duties all year long promoting and planning and strategizing on our behalf.

Justin would love to have the chance to walk you through all our new Web site can do; Casey is gripping and grinning with every writer and tour operator that is passing through our beautiful region; Neil is there supporting and keeping everyone on task; and Bonnie is working hard toward making the Mat-Su South Gateway Visitors Center a reality.

As a team they form our satellite office. They are there to help, to listen, to bring our issues to those who can make changes and to help us be successful. If you have a question, give them a call.

Dee Dee Kay works for CIRI Alaska Tourism Corporation and is the president of the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors.



Dee Dee Kay

Mat-Su Visitor Information Center closing Sept. 15 for winter season

The Mat-Su Visitor Information Center will shut its doors for the winter season on Sept. 15, bringing an end to the busy 2010 summer season.

"We stayed consistently busy the entire summer," Visitor Information Center Manager Lorraine Jallen said. "My girls were busy helping people every day."

During the 2010 summer season, more than 4,000 visitors stopped by the center, which is open May 15 through Sept. 15 each year. Jallen and her staff assist visitors with trip information, suggested tours and activities and more.

"It seems like we had more people bringing their kids in to see the animals we have on display," Jallen said. "We had a lot of families that came through this summer."

This summer, the Trunk Road realignment and detour brought thousands of vehicles past the Visitor Information Center, leading to a greater awareness of the center's location in front of Mat-Su Regional Medical Center.

The center also got increased signage this summer, to make it more visible from the Parks Highway and the frontage road.

From the executive director

Gateway Visitor Center project moving forward

In 2008 the Mat-Su CVB applied for and was awarded a National Scenic Byways grant to develop a plan for a new "Gateway" partnership visitor center. Agnew::Beck Consulting along with Wolf Architecture and RECON, LLC were selected to lead the study and produce a plan to move the project forward. In June the final draft of the Mat-Su Valley South Gateway Visitor Center Preliminary Feasibility Study was approved by the Mat-Su CVB board of directors.

This is a major milestone for our organization. The entire document is available online at www.matsuvallyvisitorcenter.com Following is a portion of the Overview section of the Executive Summary:

The intent of the Mat-Su Valley South Gateway Visitor Center is to create a notable, visible entry point to the Mat-Su Valley, and provide visitors and residents alike with an inspiring, beautiful, popular facility that is emblematic of the place. The center must also be a destination in its own right, offering interesting activities and learning experiences. The vision for the facility is grand; this vision will be tempered and refined throughout the planning, fundraising, design and building process, based on partner commitments, funding availability, site selection and control, programming decisions and the extent to which the center will serve various market segments.

The findings of this Preliminary Feasibility Study indicate that:



- This project is doable in a reasonable time frame, at a reasonable cost.
 - Potential partners exist that have the organizational capacity to design, construct and operate this facility.
 - There is a significant level of interest from partner organizations to work cooperatively in establishing the center.
 - The facility and its programs can contribute significantly to the economic development of the Mat-Su Valley by increasing visitation, tourism and recreation in the Mat-Su Valley, particularly nearer to population centers. Further, there is an established need to relocate and replace the existing Mat-Su Visitor Center.
 - There is a need to promote

stewardship and caretaking of the Mat-Su Valley's cultural and natural resources for both visitors and residents, and there is a desire on the part of many organizations to assist each other in this effort.

The next steps are outlined in a Work Plan of six Phases that total six to seven years. We currently are in year three, beginning Phase 3: Project Action Plan. Phase 1: Pre-Planning and Phase 2: Project Assessment (the final Plan) has been completed. Phase 3 involves continued, focused outreach to partners, create a formal project leadership and establish formal partnership agreements, identify preferred site and site access, refine project programs, fundraising strategy and secure planning funding (project manager, design work and local match).

A meeting has been scheduled for Sept. 15 at 3 p.m. at the Mat-Su CVB office to begin Phase 3, inviting potential partners and establishing a Task Force team. The team will approve a draft brochure designed as a marketing piece for fundraising efforts and gathering community support.

Finally, I would like to thank Assembly member Cindy Bettine who sponsored a resolution issuing the matching funds of \$21,000 for the grant.

Bonnie Quill is the executive director of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Meeting

Continued from Page 1

basis, rather than interested-based or localized issues.

You can submit a resolution to the Mat-Su CVB office no later than 5 p.m. Nov. 15. If you can't make the deadline but still want to present it at the membership meeting, please bring 50 copies.

Actions taken by the membership require a vote, and each business member is entitled to have one voting representative. If a quorum is not established at the annual meeting, the vote will be considered as an advisory.

For more information, interested members can contact the Mat-Su CVB office at 746-5000.

Board: Nominations accepted

Continued from Page 1

tourism in Alaska, and the Mat-Su Valley," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. "There are exciting projects ahead of us, such as the Gateway Visitor Center project, and serving on the board is a way to be proactive in the tourism industry."

Self-nominations are allowed, and all nominations are reviewed by the Nominating Committee prior to ballots being mailed to the general membership. Board members address policy and industry issues facing the CVB.

Seats are not designated by region or business sector, but

the CVB strives to have accurate representation of the membership. The deadline for submitting nominations is Sept. 30. If a member is interested in running, they should submit a declaration of interest, a 300-word candidate statement for the ballot brochure and a color head shot photograph by the deadline.

Nominations can be mailed to Mat-Su CVB Nominating Committee, 7744 E. Visitors View Ct., Palmer AK 99645; faxed to (907) 746-2688; or e-mailed to bonnie@alaskavisit.com.

Approximately 4-6 board meetings are held annually, and a special board retreat is scheduled in mid-December.

Assembly candidates share views on tourism

The Mat-Su CVB recently sent surveys to all Mat-Su Borough Assembly candidates, addressing tourism issues. Following are the four questions they were asked, as well as the answers from all the candidates who responded. All candidates have been invited to the Sept. 10 luncheon at Evangelo's, where they will talk about their candidacy for the Assembly and take questions from Mat-Su CVB members.

Question 1

As with most local and regional convention and visitor bureaus, the Mat-Su CVB receives monies collected by the Borough through a bed tax of 5 percent. This year the Assembly approved during budget deliberations an appropriation of \$585,000 for FY2011 in a grant agreement with the Mat-Su CVB. This equates to 65 percent of the projected transient

accommodations tax. The board would like the Assembly to solidify the formula with a three-year grant agreement passed this winter. Would you consider the recommendation of a 65/35 formula (of a 5 percent bed tax) between the Mat-Su CVB and the borough for long-term sustainable funding? Why or why not?

Question 2

Because of state and local budget worries, there is concern among tourism businesses that other groups and government will increasingly look at bed tax revenues as a funding source for non-tourism expenditures. Would you support the use of bed tax monies for non-tourism purposes. If yes, what?

Question 3

On Aug. 3, 2010 the Assembly adopted the Mat-Su Borough

Economic Development Strategic Plan. Tourism is identified in the plan as an important opportunity for economic development and recommends increasing tourism marketing efforts. Along with other industries, where do you rate the importance of tourism?

Question 4

The completed Tourism Infrastructure Needs Study (June 2008) has identified projects that would increase the economic impact of tourism in the Valley. A top priority is development of a South Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center. The Mat-Su CVB received a National Scenic Byways grant to create a feasibility study for the new Visitor Center and recently completed the plan. Next step is to begin implementation. Do you support the development of a new South Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center?

Assembly District 1 James Tapley

1. Oppose. The sole intent of the bed tax was to promote tourism in the Mat-Su, and it should not be used for any other purpose. The only split should be Mat-Su CVB and administrative costs for collecting the tax.
2. Oppose – it should be used for tourism only.
3. Tourism is an important renewable resource. We should take full advantage of this.
4. Yes, we need to get the new gateway visitor center started. The old center has served its purpose and is outdated.

Assembly District 1 Warren Keogh

1. Favor. Whether using the Mat-Su CVB Board-recommended split of 65/35 percent, or an alternative split of the 5 percent bed tax revenues, the Mat-Su CVB and communities that benefit from the revenue sharing, should enjoy the certainty and stability of long term funding in order to fulfill the MSCVB mission. This is especially so in light of the recent downturn in visitors coming to the Valley and diminished bed tax revenues.
2. Oppose. Established for the purpose of furthering the growth of the tourism in the Valley, bed tax revenues should be dedicated to the tourism sector of our economy. Funding should be used to promote the development of large anchor projects, in addition to investing local community infrastructure needs, such as trailhead improvements, information kiosks, signage, restrooms, etc. Larger anchor projects I support include the Hatcher Pass ski resort, the Gateway visitor center, the Independence Mine State Park, a Glenn Highway raptor center, and others.
3. Near the top. Tourism is a key industry of the Valley and integral to a diversified, sustainable local economy. The MSB Economic Development Plan lays out a very good road map for expanding tourism infrastructure. Even in tough economic times we should be able to retain or expand the \$282 million in value and 4,000 jobs with well-planned marketing and quality visitor opportunities.
4. Yes, a new South Gateway Visitor Center will undoubtedly boost tourism. Our existing visitor center, once highly visible and a destination of so many visitors, is losing its effectiveness due to access difficulties, loss of visibility from the highway, and the decline in visitor stops. I look forward to reading the recently completed feasibility study for a new South Gateway Visitor Center, a center that could further promote the extraordinary natural assets and help develop the economic vitality of the Mat-Su Borough. It is one of several important ways we can make our Valley an even higher quality destination for travelers and visitors.

Note: Mat-Su Borough Assembly District 2 candidates Peter Houston and John Leiner did not respond to the candidate survey, so their answers are not available for publication in the newsletter.

Candidates respond to tourism survey questions

Assembly District 1 George Rausher

1. Favor! The Bed Tax program is an essential player in the economy of our borough. I believe the program plays a key role in developing that sector of the Valley economy. I see plenty of great business opportunities in the tourist industry with many avenues that are still wide open and would attract many new businesses if the support was in place. I would first need to be assured of where the funds were to be spent and how effective those programs are to the attraction of more tourists and new related supporting businesses. Also, the agreement would need to be crafted to avoid the very real problem that arose in Anchorage in which the construction strategy for the new Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center hit a stumbling block due to a long term grant. The ACVB eventually fully

participated in a program that actually received voter approval to raise bed taxes and made them an even more active partner in the booking/ managing of the center, which gave them great advantage in attracting conventions.

2. Favor! As an avid birder, I see nothing in the foreseeable future that would necessitate using the bed tax monies for non-tourism purposes. Instead, we should focus our efforts into creating our own niche market to attract the "nature" tourists that really have no interest in headquartering their vacation in just another big city, (i.e. Anchorage high rise hotels). They hear the call of the wild and we need to be the means for them to achieve their hearts desire.

3. Tourism is HUGE! It has its own source of promotional revenue (i.e. bed tax) and therefore is not

competing with local government expenses. Besides the thousands of hands on jobs within the industry, we would also be in an enviable position of attracting new white collar high paying jobs in today's computer driven world as we fully develop an industry without limits as we consider all our prospects.

4. Before responding too definitively, I would first like to study the plan. "Pouring concrete" always entails large expenditures not only for the original construction but also the maintenance and manning of the facility. If there is a documented demand for it, as you have stated, then we need to roll up our collective community sleeves and figure out how it can be done without competing with basic services and educational dollars, etc.

Assembly District 1 Bruce Walden

1. Favor. At least as I understand it. Tourism is a big part of what we do here, but I am of the mind set that if we are going to count on those tourist bucks, we need to do our part to make our Valley convenient to the tourists but also those of us who live here all the time and have to work our way around them.

2. Oppose. I am very much against money collected for any purpose being used for some other. I will be doing my part to ferret out any such shenanigans as I know one assembly already is. More to follow if I'm elected. Bottom line, no, I do not agree with robbing Peter to pay Paul.

3. At this juncture, tourism is one of our most important industries. I believe that our other industries and tourism can be mutually complimentary. For instance, people are always amazed to come here and see Alaskan farms. So, let's capitalize on that. One man suggested building a type of natural "sea world" in which one could go under the water level in a long hall way, and look through thick glass to watch the salmon spawning and other such interesting things. He never, to my knowledge, receive one iota of help from the Mat-Su Small Business Development folks, not even so much as a list of possible investors. I believe that we have many industries that can and must be developed, but as stated above, I do not see a reason to choose one to the detriment of the other.

4. In theory yes. I'd have to see the actual plan, but I am for most things that brag about my borough.

Assembly District 2 candidate Tom Braund

1. This is a nice idea because the Visitor's Bureau does a nice job of being an advertising agency for businesses that tourists and residents can use for their entertainment. On the other hand, I can hardly classify the Visitor's Bureau as infrastructure. Unless I'm missing something, the current system of funding the Visitor's Bureau makes the Borough a philanthropic donor. That is not even good business!

2. Oppose. Government should not even attempt to be in business. Business should be in business. Here we have a classic example of one deviation from good government expanding into increasing deviations, a slide into government running business. When left to its own devices, business will prosper the Borough better than government can.

3. The Visitors Bureau is an important tourism clearinghouse and there's money to be made in it. Though the desired end is to increase Borough product, and that is a good end, I

believe this is not the best way to that end. Planned economies historically end in Socialism often followed by legally acquired dictatorship. Actual case studies abound: Rome, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Castro, Mao, Il Jong. These are dangerous historic good ideas which used a method that led to a wrong end. It is not government's job to plan economies; people in government sometimes take illegal advantage of such strategies. Economic planning opposes free enterprise. Capitalism using free enterprise works; China is proving it! Also historically, though it is scary to wonder if it will work, free enterprise has worked every time. When there is any industry to be grown up, there is somebody willing and ready for the opportunity. Economic planning's wonderful ideas actually steal opportunity from free enterprise entrepreneurs. The end result is always loss.

4. Yes, by private enterprise. I say private business will do a far better job than the current Bureau. Put it up to the highest bidder and



FROM JAPAN TO ALASKA

Mat-Su CVB Marketing & Communications Manager Casey Ressler, along with board president Dee Dee Kay, met with Japanese tour operators at Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge in August. The operators were part of a FAM through Japan Air Lines, and were visiting Alaska for future product development in the Japan market.

Valley featured in national media

The Mat-Su CVB has been busy showcasing the Valley to national travel writers and photographers, resulting in great exposure for the area.

In August, Casey Ressler hosted David Landsel, the travel editor at the New York Post, on a day trip in the Mat-Su Valley. They visited the Alaska State Fair, Friday Flings and had lunch at Turkey Red in downtown Palmer.

Publication is set for sometime this fall for the Mat-Su Valley portion of his Alaska adventure.

"Hosting travel writers is a way for us to generate coverage, publicity and positive press about our area to a large audience that we couldn't begin to reach with our advertising budget alone," Ressler said.

The Mat-Su CVB also arranged two photo shoots for photographers, who use the images to promote Alaska through the Alaska Travel Industry Association, as well as locally in Mat-Su CVB collateral.

Also in August, the Mat-Su CVB met with and arranged a press trip for the field editor of the Japanese Globe Trotter Alaska Guide Book. The writer went on a flightseeing trip with Talkeetna Air Taxi, a jetboat trip with Mahay's Riverboat Service and overnights at the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge.

"The Globe Trotter book is the largest Alaska travel book printed in Japan, so this is a great opportunity to reach an international audience," Ressler said. "Mat-Su has been featured prominently in the guide book in the past."

In October, the Mat-Su CVB will attend the Alaska Media Roadshow in Santa Barbara, in conjunction with the Alaska Travel Industry Association. Organized by ATIA's public relations firm, Thompson & Co., Media Roadshow is an invitation-only two-day session in which leading national travel writers come to meet Alaska and hear story ideas.

"The Mat-Su Valley has gotten some fantastic press coverage as a result of us attending Alaska Media Roadshow," said executive director Bonnie Quill. "We've been featured on the front of the travel section of the San Francisco Chronicle, and we've been featured on a four-page spread in the New York Times, among other publications."

SURVEY: Assembly candidates

See SURVEY, Page 6

watch the Valley grow faster. A wise businessman will likely keep most of the current employees because they already know how to run it. And he'll improve on it! (I am using proper English here; she is included in he. Many women are successful entrepreneurs also.)

**Assembly District 2
Noel Woods**

1. Without a seat on the Assembly, I cannot answer this with certainty

what effect I would have on Assembly decisions. I do consider the visitor industry an economic benefit to many Mat-Su Borough residents.

2. In general, I would oppose bed taxes for non-tourism purposes, but the devil is in the details.

3. A – extraction resources. B – infrastructure development. C – Education. D – Tourism.

4. At this time I can only applaud the continuing efforts of the Mat-Su CVB to bring tourists to our area.

The Mat-Su Borough election is Tuesday, October 5. For a complete list of polling places and other election information, visit the Mat-Su Borough's Web site at www.matsugov.us

Web site gets Google maps, mobile optimized

The Mat-Su CVB launched its new Web site in early May, but development has not stopped, as two new programs are being added for members' benefit this month.

In mid-September, Google maps will be integrated into the CVB site, www.alaskavisit.com. Every member listing, as well as events in the calendar, will feature a Google Map to their location.

"Google Maps integration has worked very successfully for other CVB's, and we're excited to add it to the Web site," said Mat-Su CVB Marketing and Communications Manager Casey Ressler. "It's another tool for members to gain exposure on the site."

At other CVBs, there have been some minor issues regarding correct mapping by Google. If Mat-Su CVB members notice any irregularities in their Google Map listing when it goes live, they should contact Ressler at casey@alaskavisit.com.

Also in September, a mobile-enhanced version of the site will go live for travelers accessing the site on smartphones such as the iPhone, Android or Blackberry.

When a traveler accesses www.alaskavisit.com

from their phone, it will automatically redirect them to the mobile version.

The mobile version will include just member listings, separated by category, and on each member listing, a simple click on the phone number will get users to your business or to your web site. There will also be a link to the full HTML version of the site.

"More and more, smartphone technologies have changed the game," Ressler said. "Travelers want information immediately, and by optimizing our site for use with handheld devices, we're giving them easier access to information – and members' information."

The Mat-Su CVB also signed a contract earlier this summer with Navteq, a company that feeds information to mobile GPS devices in vehicles.

All member listings are pulled from the CVB database and fed to the GPS units, making it easier for GPS users to find individual Mat-Su CVB members while driving.

For information about any of the Web development projects, interested members can contact casey@alaskavisit.com.



Consumer, tour operator marketing plans set CVB will attend National Tour Association, American Bus Association

The Mat-Su CVB is gearing up for a busy winter, as representatives from the CVB will attend several trade and consumer shows in Alaska and the Lower 48, promoting tourism opportunities in the Valley.

The first show is the Oxygen and Octane Winter Recreation Show, in Anchorage at the Dena'ina Center in early October.

The show is produced by Coast Magazine, a locally-owned publication that is also a Mat-Su CVB member. It is the only winter recreation show in Southcentral Alaska, and this year marks the first time the Mat-Su CVB will attend.

"We'll have trail maps of the Valley, and a lot of winter information for the public," said Casey Ressler, marketing manager of the Mat-Su CVB. "It's a great place to connect with the in-state market and show them why they should come to the Valley for winter recreation."

In November, Ressler will attend

"NTA appointments are highly qualified, so your appointments are very focused. They are all tour operators looking to enter the Alaska market, or expand and enhance their current Alaska tours."

*- Casey Ressler,
Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager*

the National Tour Association Convention, where he will have prescheduled appointments with tour operators who sell Alaska product. This trade event brings together the most sellers and buyers of travel packages in the country, and is a great opportunity to highlight new products in the Valley.

"NTA appointments are highly qualified, so your appointments are very focused," Ressler said. "They are all tour operators who are looking to enter the Alaska market, or expand and enhance their current tours."

Members who plan to have

new products or tours in 2012 are encouraged to let Ressler know via e-mail, so he can take that information to the tour operators during appointments.

In January, Ressler will attend the American Bus Association Marketplace in Philadelphia. ABA is similar to NTA in that appointments are prescheduled with operators, but ABA is more focused on bus tour and motorcoach packages.

Last year, due to budget constraints, Mat-Su CVB did not attend the ABA Marketplace, after several years of attending the convention.

"At NTA and ABA, we build relationships with tour operators, and that pays off for our member businesses that offer group tours," Ressler said. "I'm glad that we get the opportunity to continue our relationships with ABA members, and look forward to some quality appointments."

Renewal notices sent in September

The membership year comes to a close on Sept. 30, and Mat-Su CVB members will receive renewal invoices in mid-September. We appreciate your renewal, and value you as a member.

This past year, Mat-Su CVB added extra member benefits, at no additional costs to individual members. The Mat-Su CVB's Web site, www.alaskavisit.com, has more member information than ever before, with the relaunch of the site in May.

"Members now have the ability to post two photos, a 170-character narrative and post coupons, all for free," said Mat-Su CVB Membership Manager Justin Saunders. "We previously charged for these upgrades, but we've decided to make these upgrades available to members for free, as a way to help boost their online exposure."

Members also can take advantage of a member log-in portal on the site, where they can make changes to their online listings, add contact information and update all of their amenities. Members can rotate their listing photographs seasonally if they choose.

"If a member has a problem with the portal, they can give me a call and I can walk them through the steps. We don't want members to miss out on this opportunity," Saunders said.

Membership is \$150 annually, which runs from Sept. 30-Sept. 30 each year. Other marketing opportunities, including enhanced Web listings, cooperative advertising in magazines and print, and brochure distribution at consumer shows are available for nominal fees.

Membership dues have never increased in the history of the organization, which began in 1986.

"We've had the same membership fee structure for 25 years, which I think is pretty remarkable," said Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su CVB executive director. "We want membership to be very affordable, so all businesses can take advantage of being a Mat-Su CVB member."

If you have any questions on membership renewals, accessing the Web site or member benefits in general, interested members can contact Saunders at 746-5032 or via e-mail at Justin@alaskavisit.com.

Award nominations sought

The stars of the tourism industry will be honored at the Nov. 19 awards luncheon, held in conjunction with the business seminar and annual meeting at Evangelo's.

Nominations are being accepted for the awards, which honor both individuals and groups that have contributed to the industry during the last year. Nominees are reviewed by the Awards Committee, which ultimately selects the winners.

"There are always a lot of deserving nominees, and that's why it's important that we take time to recognize those who have made a positive difference in the industry," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

The Northern Lights Award is given to a community in the Mat-Su Borough that has distinguished itself in the past year for tourism development and promotion. Last year, Alaska State Parks Mat-Su office earned the award for infrastructure improvements at parks around the borough.

The Cheechako Award is presented to a relatively new tourism business that shows entrepreneurial zeal. Last year, Alaska Ultra Sport was the recipient for their successful tours and the popular Alaska Iditarod Trail Invitational race.

The Tourism Angel Award honors an individual who has supported and assisted the Mat-Su CVB and shows

"There are always a lot of deserving nominees, and that's why it's important that we take time to recognize those who have made a positive difference in the industry."

- Bonnie Quill,
Mat-Su CVB Executive Director

concern for the growth of tourism-related businesses throughout the Mat-Su Valley. Trisha Costello of Talkeetna Roadhouse was the 2009 winner for her many efforts to promote Talkeetna as premier visitor destination.

The Mat-Su CVB's final award is the Gold Star Award, which is given to a business or organization that has made a significant contribution to the tourism industry as a whole. Last year, the Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats organization was the recipient for its efforts in restoring and promoting the Hay Flats Refuge.

The Mat-Su CVB encourages members to identify those individuals they feel warrant special attention, and complete the included awards nomination sheet on Page 9.

All nominations must be received by Oct. 25 at 5 p.m. They can be mailed to Mat-Su CVB Awards Committee, 7744 E. Visitors View Ct., Palmer, AK 99645; faxed to (907) 746-2688; or e-mailed to info@alaskavisit.com.

Past Mat-Su CVB award winners

Northern Lights Award

Alaska State Parks
Houston Chamber of Commerce
Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway
Wasilla Chamber of Commerce
Mat-Su Borough

Tourism Angel Award

Trisha Costello
Bonnie Quill
Cheryl Metiva
Karen Harris
Stephen Mahay

Cheechako Award

Alaska Ultra Sport

Knik River Lodge
Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours
Denali View Raft Adventures
Friday Flings

Gold Star Award

Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats
Iditarod Trail Headquarters
AMSBBA
Alaska Railroad
Premier Alaska Tours

Special Awards

Bethany Buckingham (Spirit of Tourism)
Monica Barton (Spirit of Tourism)

Call 745-5000 to reserve your spot at the awards luncheon, held in conjunction with the annual meeting and educational seminars on Nov. 19

Northern Lights Award

Honors a community in the Mat-Su Borough that has distinguished itself for outstanding tourism promotion and/or development

I nominate:

Gold Star Award

This prestigious award recognizes a business or organization that has made a significant accomplishment in the tourism industry.

I nominate:

Tourism Angel Award

Awarded to an individual who has supported and assisted Mat-Su CVB and has shown true concern for the success and growth of all members in the Mat-Su Borough.

I nominate:

Cheechako Award

Awarded to a new tourism business, organization or entity showing entrepreneurial zeal and managing not only to survive, but to thrive in its early years.

I nominate:

... It Happens Award

Awarded to an individual, business or organization that took a lemon and made lemonade. It is intended to laugh with, not at, others!

I nominate:

Special Awards: If you feel someone deserves recognition but doesn't fit a category, tell us who they are and why they merit special commendation!

News from the Mat-Su CVB membership

Alaska Snow Safaris and Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours

announce that snowmobile tours in Alaska have never been so complete. Our packages include the Iditarod Trail tour in Willow, riding the Denali Highway from Cantwell to Paxson, Valdez high mountain extreme trips, Spencer Glacier tours near Girdwood, trail rides in Turnagain Pass, and many other custom multi-day packages. We have the snowmobile adventure that is just right for your winter guests. Call and schedule now. 745-2505.

The Alaska Railroad's 2010 Blues

Train runs Sept. 18-19. Tickets are on sale and cost \$249 per person, double occupancy, and riders must be 21 and older. The Great Alaskan Beer Train departs Oct. 3, and tickets are \$159 per person, and again, riders must be 21 or older. The Alyeska Mystery Train runs Oct. 30, at \$239 per person, double occupancy, and riders must be 21 or older. For more information on any of these special trains, visit AlaskaRailroad.com or www.facebook.com/alaskarailroad

Matanuska-Susitna College is an extended college of the University of Alaska Anchorage. MSC was changed from its previous designation as a community college by University System restructuring in 1987. Now serving nearly 1900 students per semester, MSC was known originally as Palmer Community College, and provided its first course offerings

to residents in 1958. The campus is located on a 950 acre site on Trunk Road, halfway between Palmer and Wasilla. A modern 102,676 square foot facility houses the majority of the educational activities.

Sheep Mountain Lodge is running a "Fall Colors Special" for cabin rentals, through Sept. 12. Classic cabins are just \$99 (plus tax) or premier cabins are \$159 (plus tax), which includes breakfast. Good for new reservations only, and you must mention the "Fall Color Special." Visit www.sheepmountain.com or call 745-5121.

In celebration of 100 years for the Iditarod Trail Survey and 100 years for the **Knik Museum** building, there will be a free concert on Sept. 11, featuring Hobo Jim. The event takes place at Knik Museum and Musher's Hall of Fame, Mile 13.9 Knik Goose Bay Road, from 1-3 p.m. Also during the concert, the Historical Society will be drawing for the winners of the raffle going on for a Talkeetna Air Taxi flightseeing trip. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5 and are available at the Knik Museum, Wasilla Farmers Market or call 376-5679.

The **Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats** are hosting photography walks for the "Autumn Light" program at Reflections Lake. Led by APH president, artist and photographer Kris Abshire, the walks feature the seasonal change as it reflects the rich colors of fall and watch for migrating

bird species and year-round residents such as moose as they prepare for winter. Dress for the weather. Bring any camera you have, or just come enjoy the walk; binoculars recommended. Water and a snack suggested. The walks are scheduled for Sept. 7 at 6:30 p.m.; Sept. 12 at 4 p.m. and Sept. 18 at 2 p.m.

If the crisp autumn air brings on your appetite, come satisfy it at the **Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats'** first Family Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser on Sept. 17 from 5-8 p.m. at the Kendall Park octagon building off the Palmer-Wasilla Highway. Enjoy a simple but satisfying meal of pasta, bread, salad and soft while supporting APH's efforts to improve and enhance the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge for all to enjoy. Call 357-8711.

Bra is the word at the **Dorothy G. Page Museum**. The museum is seeking bra-inspired art for the Brassieres to Nowhere exhibit Oct. 1-29, in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Artists of all ages are invited to submit ready-to-hang artwork with a bra-inspired theme. Categories include mixed media, painting, photography, prints and sculpture. Non-cash jurors' awards will be given in each category as well as a People's Choice Award. A \$10 nonrefundable entry fee and completed entry form must accompany each piece. Entry forms and rules are available online at www.cityofwasilla.com/museum.

Welcome to these new Mat-Su CVB members

Northern Lights Media/KTUU
Jennie Smelker
(907) 762-9220
www.ktuu.com

Arctic Gardens B&B
Ken Widmer
(907) 373-2222

www.arcticgardensbedandbreakfast.com

Krazy Moose Subs
Tammy Suders
(907) 357-8774

Grizzly Expeditions
Rick Townsend
(907) 841-5908

www.grizzlyexpeditions.com

Talkeetna Majestic Log Home
Francine Curran
(907) 733-5900

www.talkeetnamajestic.com

Denai Brewing Company
Sassan Mossanen
(907) 733-2537
www.denalibrewingcompany.com

Flying Squirrel Bakery Café
Anita Golton
(907) 733-6887
www.flyingsquirrelcafe.com

Coming Attractions Theatres
Cheryl Metiva
www.catheatres.com

Golden North Alaskan Tours
Corky Sager
(907) 357-2380
www.goldennorthalaskantours.com

Gold Cord
Mine Historic Tours
Ben Renshaw
(907) 322-3239

MJ's Bread N Butter Charters
James Norris
(907) 472-2396
www.mjsbreadnbuttercharters.com

Sleeping Inn Alaska
Cec Matlock
(907) 354-4504

Fairbanks Springhill Suites
Dawn Kimberlin
(907) 273-2477

Tourism industry calendar of events

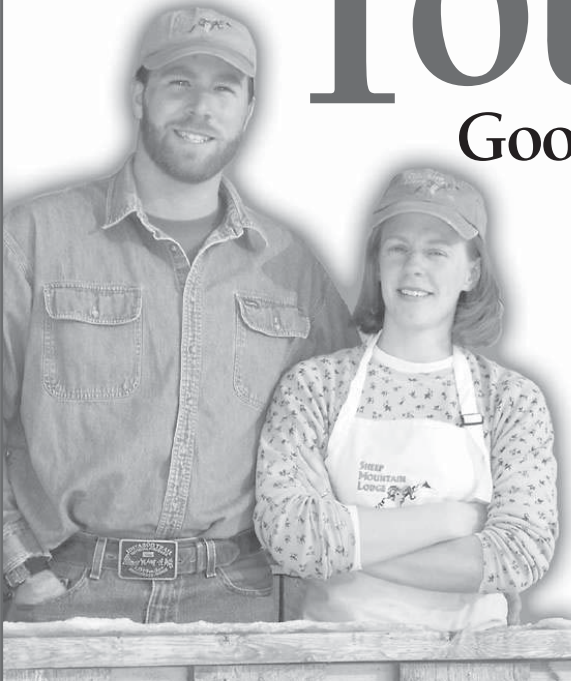
Sept. 10	Mat-Su CVB Member Luncheon Borough Assembly candidate forum starts at noon	Evangelo's
Sept. 24	Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors Meeting, 10 a.m.	Mat-Su CVB office
Oct. 4-8	ATIA Annual Convention Mat-Su CVB will attend	Whitehorse, Canada
Oct. 8-10	Oxygen & Octane consumer show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Dena'ina Center (Anchorage)
Oct. 15	Mat-Su CVB Member Luncheon Starts at noon, topic TBA	Evangelo's
Oct. 24-26	Alaska Media Roadshow Mat-Su CVB will attend	Santa Barbara, CA
Nov. 12-17	National Tour Association Convention Casey Ressler will represent Mat-Su CVB	Montreal, Canada
Nov. 19	Voice of the Membership annual meeting Educational seminars start at 9 a.m. Annual meeting starts at 11 a.m.	Evangelo's
Nov. 19	Mat-Su CVB Awards Luncheon Noon, held in conjunction with annual meeting	Evangelo's

Community calendar of events

Through Oct. 3	Tempered Glass Art Local artists featured in unique display	Pandemonium Books
Sept. 10	Wine Dinner Annual wine dinner features the best from Chef Matt Zimney, with wine and food pairings.	Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge
Sept. 11	Big Lake Chamber of Commerce Chili Cookoff	Mile 4 Big Lake Road
Sept. 18	Blue Tarp & Duct Tape Ball A great "Only in Alaska" event	Menard Sports Center
Sept. 25	"High Tea," with hat competition Fund-raiser for Mat-Su Special Santa Program	Palmer Elks Lodge
Oct. 1-29	Brassieres to Nowhere Art Exhibit Recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month	Dorothy G. Page Museum
Oct. 30	Halloween Hollow Fund-raiser for the Mat-Su Special Santa Program	Raven Hall, (fairgrounds)
Nov. 19	"A Moment For Me" Ladies Night out Fund-raiser for the Mat-Su Special Santa Program	Raven Hall
December	Talkeetna Winterfest Winterfest events take place all December	Around Talkeetna
Dec. 11-12	Palmer Colony Christmas Celebration Annual two-day event is always a hit	Around Palmer
Tuesdays weekly	Wasilla Chamber of Commerce membership luncheons	Grand View Inn & Suites
Wednesdays weekly	Palmer Chamber of Commerce membership luncheons	Palmer Elks Lodge

Tourism:

Good for the whole Valley.



“We try to provide a great experience for our guests up here. We also share the tourism dollars with many Valley businesses. From building materials, cleaning supplies, greenhouses and plumbers, we purchase most all of our goods and services in the Mat-Su Valley.”

ZACK & ANJANETTE STEER
SHEEP MOUNTAIN LODGE
MP 113.5 GLENN HWY.

YAHOO!

MAT-SU CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU • www.alaskavisit.com



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