

# The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Winter 2016

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Paul Ouimet of DestinationNEXT explains the metrics used to complete a statistical analysis about the strength of a destination during a presentation Nov. 7.

## From the executive director

# DestinationNEXT workshop results provide focus for board retreat

On Nov. 7 at Government Peak Chalet the results of the DestinationNEXT assessment were shared with the board of directors and members.

Mat-Su CVB partnered with Visit Anchorage to bring Paul Ouimet of InterVISTAS Consulting to Alaska and facilitate a workshop to review the results of the assessment and discuss strategic implications and key issues.

More than 40 surveys were completed by bureau partners and stakeholders in the travel industry including board members, chambers, city and borough government leaders, customers and the Destination Management Organization management team. The online diagnostic tool was

designed to assist DMOs to complete an objective self-assessment which can help determine priorities and strategies for the future.

The goal of the survey was to determine if there are any gaps, key issues and opportunities for potential products, amenities, education, programming and experiences that would benefit the tourism industry in the Mat-Su Borough.

The three key strategic challenges revealed in the report are:

- Rallying the community to work together towards a realistic vision and strategy

See NEXT, Page 3

**2016-2017  
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*From the president's desk*

## Board of Directors excited about possibilities for 2017 and beyond

As the year draws to a close, it's natural to reflect on the year that just passed, but it's an even better time to look to the future. In the last few months of 2016, the Mat-Su CVB began looking to the future with the DestinationNext program, the election of two new board members and the formation of all-new committees. In early January, the board will also hold its annual planning retreat, bringing those goals into clearer focus.

The DestinationNext program gives us an accurate portrayal of our destination through a variety of metrics, and the board will be examining the results during our retreat. The Mat-Su was the first Alaska destination to be part of this international program, and we're excited about the possibilities it presents for us to grow as a destination. The retreat will be held at Sheep Mountain Lodge on Jan. 10-11. If members would like to provide input to the board, please feel free to contact one of us (contact info is at left).

Earlier this month, the Internet, Marketing and Membership committees all met to give recommendations to the board for consideration. The marketing committee now includes 12 leaders from the industry, and the first meeting was very beneficial in helping define our marketing priorities for the upcoming year. The membership and Internet

committees also featured more members than ever before, and I'm encouraged to see members engaged in the process and being a part of helping the organization achieve and exceed its goals.

In November, we also welcomed two new board members – Fernando Salvador of the Alaska Collection and Collette Hand of Alaska's Harvest B&B. Mark Austin of the Musk Ox Farm was also reelected. The

board of directors is a great mix of small businesses, large businesses and has representatives from every sector of the industry. I'm looking forward to working with them, and the entire board, this year.

A dynamic and energetic board, a more engaged membership and the road map DestinationNext provides are reasons to be excited about the progress and vision of the Mat-Su CVB as we move into 2017.

The board of directors is committed to doing all it can to continually grow as an organization and be a positive economic driver in the communities we serve.

Tourism is one of Alaska's bright spots, and we're excited about what the future holds for the Mat-Su Valley.

Have a safe and joyous holiday season, and here's to a great jump start on 2017!

*Cheryl Metiva is the president of the Mat-Su CVB board of directors.*



**Cheryl Metiva,  
Mat-Su CVB Board President**

## Happy holidays!

*The Mat-Su CVB office will be closed December 26 through January 2 as we celebrate the holidays. We'll reopen on Tuesday, January 3. Have a safe and merry holiday season.*

# New board members seated at November meeting

The Mat-Su CVB board of directors seated two new members at the annual meeting on Nov. 4.

Mat-Su CVB members elected Fernando Salvador of Alaska Collection (Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge) and Collette Hand of Alaska's Harvest B&B to the board of directors, and also re-elected Mark Austin of the Musk Ox Farm to serve another term.

"We're happy to have Collette and Fernando join the board, and have Mark continue with another term. I'm appreciative to all the candidates who ran," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. "Every candidate was very deserving. It was a very close election, and all of the candidates were excellent."

Hand and Salvador take the seats of Zack Steer, of A2Z Consult, and Travis Taylor, of Premier Alaska Tours, after they chose not to run for another term. Both of them were presented with plaques at the annual meeting.

"Zack and Travis made significant contributions during their time on the board, and we'll miss them," Quill said.



**Fernando Salvador, general manager of Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge, and Collette Hand, owner of Alaska's Harvest Bed & Breakfast, were elected to the board of directors. Mark Austin of the Palmer Musk Ox Farm was also re-elected to the board.**

At the November board meeting, the following officers were chosen: Cheryl Metiva, president, Extreme Fun Center; Mark Fleenor, vice president, Sheep Mountain Lodge; Roberta Caenepeel, secretary, Explore Tours; Mark Austin,

treasurer, Musk Ox Farm; and Israel Mahay, executive committee member, Mahay's Jet Boat Adventures.

Other board members include Karen Harris, Alaska Garden Gate B&B; Cole Chambers, K2 Aviation; and Craig Saunders, Alaska Trailside Lodging.

# NEXT: Mat-Su is first Alaska DMO to participate

Continued from Page 1

- Building community recognition and acceptance that transformational change is needed

- Implementing the strategy with limited resources

Paul noted that we have a slightly below average score for community support and engagement, and that is not surprising after the past year of the divisive issue of potentially raising the bed tax.

"You need to build community support first, because it's going to take the entire community working together to make you a Trailblazer," Ouimet said.

He reported that Mat-Su CVB is doing very well on the performance of the destination (measuring and tracking performance) and starting with a stronger brand identity than other destinations, with a high score in authentic and unique attractions. But he added, one of the lowest scores in the number and quality of hotels.

The details in the assessment report are going to be very useful for the board of directors planning retreat in January, which is being held at Sheep Mountain Lodge.



**Paul Ouimet of DestinationNEXT talks about the survey process while Amos Stephens of Settlers Bay Golf Course and Mat-Su CVB Board President Cheryl Metiva take notes.**

**View a 10-minute condensed version of the DestinationNEXT workshop at:**

**[https://youtu.be/by1\\_A14ZGMk](https://youtu.be/by1_A14ZGMk)**

## 'Stars of the Industry' honored at awards luncheon

The Mat-Su CVB recognized several local businesses and organizations for their success during the annual "Stars of the Industry" awards luncheon on Nov. 4 at Evangelo's.

The Tourism Angel award was given to Zack and Anjanette Steer. The Steers owned Sheep Mountain Lodge from 2000-2015, and were always an asset to the industry. Following the sale of Sheep Mountain Lodge, Zack remained on the Mat-Su CVB board of directors because of his care and concern for the industry as a whole.

The Northern Lights award, which is given to a community or community organization for outstanding tourism promotion and/or development, was awarded to the Palmer Museum of History and Art and Visitor Center, for their work in not only promoting Palmer, but also because they have started and participated in many events that benefit the community as a whole.

The Gold Star award, recognizing a business or organization that has made significant accomplishments, was handed to the Musk Ox Farm. The Musk Ox Farm is one of 11 charter members of the CVB.



Mark Austin presents Selena Ortega-Chiolera of the Palmer Museum with the Northern Lights awards.



Several local organizations, businesses and individuals were honored by the Mat-Su CVB at the annual "Stars of the Industry" awards luncheon in early November.

In the past six years, the farm has shown tremendous growth, and has started hosting concerts, and recently held its second OxToberfest event that was wildly successful, combining Alaska Grown food and local craft beers.

The Cheechako award, given to a relatively new tourism business, organization or entity that has managed to not only survive but thrive during its early years, had two winners. The Extreme Fun Center was one honoree, for opening up and creating 60 new jobs during a challenging time in the economy. The second winner was Alaska Travel Connections, which is owned by Isabelle Bornemann. Bornemann has had a long career in tourism, but opened Alaska Travel Connections three years ago. They cater to international guests and have grown every year.

A special Spirit of Tourism award was given to Visit Anchorage, which had a huge impact on helping the Mat-Su CVB reach hundreds of international tour operators and travel media in the last year. In February, they hosted the annual Go West Summit, which attracted 600 tour operators, suppliers and DMOs to Anchorage. Then, in September, Visit Anchorage hosted the 900-person Adventure Travel World Summit, and again, the Mat-Su Valley was fortunate enough to be included on several pre- and post-summit adventures, as well as several Day of Adventures.

### 2016 Mat-Su CVB 'Stars of the Industry' award winners

Tourism Angel  
Zack & Anjanette Steer

Northern Lights  
Palmer Museum of History &  
Art and Visitor Center

Gold Star  
Musk Ox Farm

Cheechako  
Extreme Fun Center  
Alaska Travel Connections  
(two winners)

Spirit of Tourism  
Visit Anchorage

## Valley in the spotlight during Adventure Travel Summit

Tour operators and media from around the world got to experience several days of Mat-Su Valley activities as part of the Adventure Travel World Summit, which was held in Anchorage in late September.

Several pre-summit adventures included Mat-Su Valley activities, including glacier trekking, flightseeing, jet boating and meals at Knik River Lodge, Talkeetna Alaska Lodge and more. Then, during the summit, the Mat-Su CVB hosted a Day of Adventure in which 12 attendees visited Vern Halter's kennel and learned about what it takes to mush in the Iditarod.

"The exposure the Mat-Su Valley got from Anchorage hosting ATWS was amazing," Casey Ressler said. "On our Day of Adventure, one travel writer fell in love with the puppies at the kennel and was introduced to the Iditarod for the first time. She's already mentioned it in a national article that was published."

Following lunch with Halter at the kennel, the Mat-Su Day of Adventure continued over Hatcher Pass Road under bluebird skies, providing plenty of photo opportunities. The Day of Adventure concluded with a stop at Summit Lake and Independence Mine State Recreation Area.

The Adventure Travel World Summit marked the second time in 2016 that Anchorage brought international tour operators to Southcentral Alaska. In February, Visit Anchorage hosted Go West, with 500 attendees, and the Mat-Su CVB



In late September, the Mat-Su CVB hosted 12 tour operators and travel journalists on a Day of Adventure during the Adventure Travel World Summit. After visiting with Vern Halter at Dream a Dream Kennel, the group drove over Hatcher Pass Road and visited Independence Mine State Recreation Area.

hosted a four-day FAM trip for operators.

"Those two opportunities to showcase the Mat-Su Valley were tremendous," Ressler said. "Both of the conferences gave

us the chance to show off the Valley to a global audience of decision makers and travel influencers."

## ATIA Community Night comes to Palmer for 1st time

The Mat-Su Valley was front and center in front of the entire Alaska tourism industry in October, as it hosted Community Night during the Alaska Travel Industry Association state convention.

For the special event, the Alaska Railroad brought nine cars of passengers to the Alaska State Fairgrounds for an evening of fun, contests, food and more. The Mat-Su CVB played a big role in making the evening such a success.

"This was a big undertaking, and it came off without a hitch," Bonnie Quill said. "It was a great opportunity to show off the Mat-Su Valley to the entire tourism industry in Alaska. Everyone had a great time, and we left a lasting impression."

Three of the nine rail cars were designed with a Mat-Su focus. The Talkeetna car had the famous "Welcome to Talkeetna" sign as well as pictures of Denali, toy Bush planes and a life ring from Mahay's. Denali Brewing Company beer was served, and cookies from Talkeetna Roadhouse. The Glenn Highway car featured images of Matanuska Glacier, souvenirs from the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway and food from Turkey Red, as well as beer from Arkose Brewery. The Iditarod/Alaska Grown car featured

the entertainment (Hannah Yoder Band) as well as an Iditarod musher with a puppy from Vern Halter's Dream a Dream Kennel and Alaska Grown veggies.

"We couldn't have done this without the many businesses that jumped in and graciously offered their food and beer for the train," Quill said.

At the Alaska State Fairgrounds, a "mini" Alaska State Fair was set up with carnival games, face painting, goat milking competitions and more. A huge fireworks display concluded the evening in Palmer. Arkose Brewery was the exclusive brewery for the fairgrounds as well.

In addition to the many businesses who assisted, the Mat-Su CVB also recognized Ina Mueller of the Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce, Debbie Rinckey of Dream a Dream Kennel and Selena Ortega-Chiolera of the Palmer Museum of History and Art for volunteering to help with the evening, among many other volunteers.

The event was organized by the Anchorage ATIA Chapter, with assistance from the Mat-Su CVB, Visit Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council.

## CVB hosts Matador Network, receives national coverage

The Mat-Su Valley was featured on one of the world's largest travel sites, Matador Network, following a hosted familiarization trip in early September.

The Mat-Su CVB brought photographer Justin Bilancieri of the Matador Network to the Valley for five days, and the corresponding coverage couldn't have been better.

"Matador is a huge network, and they have tremendous reach. Justin's photo essay has been shared by more than 1,900 people on Facebook alone," said Casey Ressler. "By working with Matador Network, not only did we receive exposure on their web site, but their social media channels as well. We were very happy with the results."

Ressler said they lucked out with weather on the five-day FAM trip.

"We had gorgeous blue skies, fantastic views of Denali, the Alaska State Fair and fall colors just starting to turn," Ressler said. "It ended up being an ideal week to have a photographer here."

Bilancieri visited all corners of the Mat-Su Valley, from the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway to Hatcher Pass to the upper Susitna Valley.

"It was an extremely busy familiarization trip, but well worth it," Ressler said.

The Mat-Su CVB participates in all state media FAM trips, but also hosts two writers/photographers a year for a Mat-Su only trip. The CVB first made contact with Matador Network at the 2015 Alaska Media Road Show event in Santa Barbara, where staff had an appointment with a writer and editor for the site.

"The nice thing about working with an online publication like Matador is the



Photographer/videographer Justin Bilancieri of the Matador Network shoots images in Hatcher Pass in late September. The five-day hosted familiarization trip resulted in a national photo essay on Matador.com, one of the world's largest travel sites.

immediacy of the results," Ressler said. "In print, sometimes you are looking 18-24 months out before you see a return on a FAM trip, but with the digital world, it can be immediate. Justin's photo essay posted within two weeks. You never saw that kind of turnaround time before."

You can view the photo essay by visiting <http://matadornetwork.com/life/15-photos-prove-alaskas-mat-su-valley-prime-wild-adventure/>

The Mat-Su CVB participates in all statewide press trips, and also tries to host two individual travel journalists a year.

## Stay connected to tell our story!



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visitmatsu](http://www.twitter.com/visitmatsu)



YouTube  
"yahoomatsu" channel

Instagram  
matsuvallyak



## 2017 Visitor Guide printed, available for members

The new 2017 Mat-Su CVB Visitor Guide has been published, and 30,000 guides will be hitting the mailboxes of prospective visitors later this month, during the holiday planning season.

Once again, 100,000 copies of the guide were printed. This month, 30,000 guides are being mailed to high-potential visitors identified by the state of Alaska tourism marketing campaign.

Another 20,000 guides will be distributed in March to leads gathered from December through the end of February.

“Even in a digital world, there is still a place for a printed guide,” said Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB. “When people are planning their vacations, they definitely use the Internet, but they also like to have a physical guide to look through.”

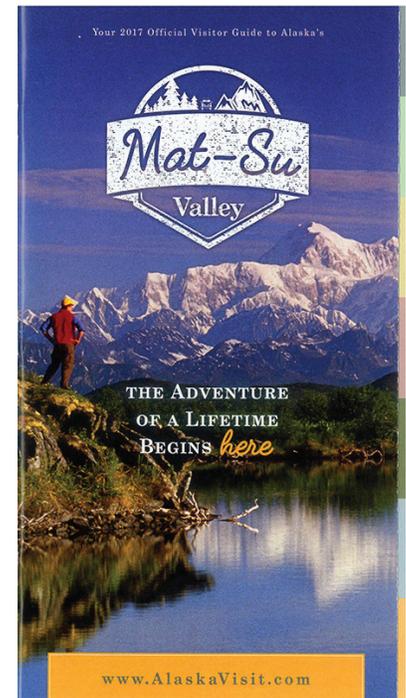
This year’s guide was contracted with Solstice Advertising, but the firm closed its doors midway through the project.

Despite the sudden change, the guide was produced on time.

“We wanted to keep the continuity in place, so we hired our graphic artist from Solstice on a freelance basis to complete the project,” Ressler explained. “It worked out well, and they produced a very visually appealing guide once again. It definitely wasn’t an ideal situation, but we worked through it and it all came together.”

Guides are also distributed throughout Alaska at visitor centers, through direct requests to the Mat-Su CVB and at consumer and trade shows the Mat-Su CVB attends. Every member has a listing in the guide, and affordable advertising rates were offered.

The cover once again features the southern view of Denali, and new photography appears throughout the guide, from the July photo shoot with Tom Bol, which thanks to amazing weather was one of the most successful photo shoots in the last few years.



## Visitor Guides distributed to top travel agents

The Mat-Su CVB is participating in a targeted travel agent mailing in January, meaning members will have their information in the hands of influential agents during the planning season.

The program, offered by the state of Alaska’s tourism marketing campaign, is a mailing to 3,500 of the top Alaska-producing travel agents in the country and features information about destinations and individual companies that opt to participate. The Mat-Su CVB Visitor Guide is part of that packet of information, along with other destinations around Alaska.

“A lot of travelers rely on travel agents when they plan an Alaska vacation, and by participating in this program, we keep the Mat-Su Valley in front of those agents when they are assisting their clients,” said Mat-Su CVB marketing and communications manager Casey Ressler. “It’s a low-cost program that makes sense for our members.”

This is the second time the Mat-Su CVB has participated in the program. Last year, the program was not offered.

## Co-op advertising offered to members in Alaska Magazine

Mat-Su CVB members can take advantage of discounted advertising in Alaska Magazine in 2017 thanks to a new cooperative marketing program.

The Mat-Su CVB partnered with Alaska Magazine for three special issues, beginning with the March 2017 issue. Mat-Su CVB will have a one-third page display ad, and ad spaces on the same page are discounted as much as 25 percent for members.

“Alaska Magazine is a great place for our members to advertise, because its readers are very interested in all things Alaska,” said Mat-Su CVB’s Casey Ressler. “Their readers are potential visitors.”

According to Alaska Magazine, its readers spend more than \$4,000 on their Alaska vacations, and more than 60 percent of its readers plan to visit Alaska within the next three years. Ninety percent of their readers live in the Lower 48, including 36 percent in the West, which is one of Alaska’s biggest markets.

All ad sales and ad design are being



handled directly by Alaska Magazine’s Melissa Bradley. Members interested in this cooperative advertising opportunity can contact her direct at (907) 275-2152 or via e-mail at Melissa.bradley@alaskamagazine.com.

“By committing to three issues, we were able to secure rates that are highly affordable” Ressler said.

The deadline for the first issue (March) is Dec. 28. The others are May and December.



YAHOO!  
**Mat-Su**

## Alaska Grown partnership kicks off new campaign

The Mat-Su CVB is partnering with the Alaska Grown program for an all-new in-state marketing campaign in spring 2017.

Choose your Alaska Grown Mat-Su Adventure will feature four different itineraries, all with at least one Alaska Grown component, and will be targeted to residents in Southcentral Alaska, as well as their visiting friends and relatives.

“We’re excited to partner with Alaska Grown and get this new creative campaign launched,” said Mat-Su CVB’s Casey Ressler.

A special landing page is being built on the Mat-Su CVB web site that features the four different itineraries, which include all the different regions in the Valley. Members will have the opportunity to participate through a number of different ways, including sponsorships or donation of a product.

The campaign is going to be marketed through many different channels, including social media, traditional print, radio, television and targeted digital advertising. Throughout the duration of the campaign, there will be Alaska Grown giveaways for those who post images on Instagram or Facebook with #AlaskaGrown #YahooMatSu.

“This really is going to be a multi-media campaign that highlights adventures, restaurants, tours and accommodations in a new way,” Ressler said.

The campaign will launch in late April and continue through mid June. Program specifics are still being worked out, and members will receive information on how they can participate in their e-bulletins closer to the program’s launch.

## Brochure distribution offered at in-state shows

The Mat-Su CVB will have a booth at four in-state consumer shows this spring, and members have the opportunity to have their rack cards in the booth for as little as \$25.

In addition to the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show, the Great Alaska Sportsman Show and the Fairbanks Outdoors Show, the Mat-Su CVB will also have a booth at the Alaska Summer Showcase, a relatively new show.

“We participated in the Alaska Summer Showcase last year and had great results, so this year, we’re offering brochure distribution at that show as well,” said Mat-Su CVB’s Casey Ressler. “The shows come at a time when Alaskans are ready to start planning their summer adventures.”

Members can have 100 rack cards distributed at each show for \$25. This year, if members want to participate in all four shows, they can save \$20, for a total cost of only \$80. Brochures must be received at the Mat-Su CVB office no later than a week prior to the show (two weeks prior to the Fairbanks show).

The Mat-Su CVB also needs show giveaways for the booth. If you are interested in donating a giveaway such as a trip or an overnight stay, the CVB will take your rack cards for free, and you’ll be featured on a tabletop display including your business name and logo. Please e-mail [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com) if you would like more information about show giveaways.

The first show is the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show, on March 24-26 at the Menard Center. That weekend is also the Alaska Summer Showcase, which is March 25 in Anchorage. The following weekend is the Great Alaska Sportsman Show at the Sullivan Arena (March 30-April 2). The Fairbanks Outdoors Show is set for April 21-23 at the Carlson Center.

To sign up for any of the brochure distribution opportunities, simply print the form on the facing page and fax it to 746-2688 or e-mail it as a PDF to [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com).

## Tour operators targeted at NTA, ABA conventions

The Mat-Su CVB will be marketing to domestic group tour operators at two upcoming national conventions – American Bus Association Marketplace and National Tour Association Travel Exchange.

At these two conventions, the Mat-Su CVB has prescheduled appointments with leading tour operators that offer Alaska tours, or are looking to add Alaska to their catalog.

“ABA and NTA are great opportunities to reach tour operators because all of the appointments are very qualified. They are also important because it’s a chance to further relationships already established with many of the operators,” said Casey Ressler.

For both conventions, a computer database appointment scheduling program is used. Suppliers research buyers and create

an appointment request list, which is then matched up with buyers, creating highly qualified appointments.

ABA Marketplace takes place Jan. 14-17 in Cleveland, while NTA Travel Exchange takes place Feb. 25-28 in St. Louis.

Members who work with tour operators are encouraged to e-mail Ressler any information regarding new products, business updates and related information.

He uses that information to communicate with the tour operators at these conventions. One of the most frequently asked questions by the operators is for new products, and Ressler distributes a new product sheet to all of his appointments.

You can send him your information at [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com) by Jan. 1 for ABA, or by Feb. 17 to be included in NTA.

## 2017 Mat-Su CVB Co-Op Marketing Opportunities

The Mat-Su CVB is offering cooperative marketing opportunities to its members for four in-state outdoor shows – Mat-Su, two in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

 **NEW!** Sign up for all four shows (basic level only) and pay only \$80, a savings of \$20!

The Mat-Su CVB also needs prize giveaways for each show, which help attract attendees to the booth. If you donate a giveaway for a show, the Mat-Su CVB will distribute your rack cards for free at the show.

Please indicate which program(s) you would like to participate in by marking the boxes with an X. Fax forms to 746-2688 or e-mail them to [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com)

Show	Basic – 100 brochures, \$25 per show	Mid – 100 brochures, 8.5 x 11 table top display, \$75 per show
Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show, March 24-26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summer Showcase, March 25, Anchorage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Great Alaska Sportsman Show, March 30-April 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairbanks Outdoors Show, April 21-23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SHOW SPECIAL – ALL FOUR FOR \$80</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(not available)

Business name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_

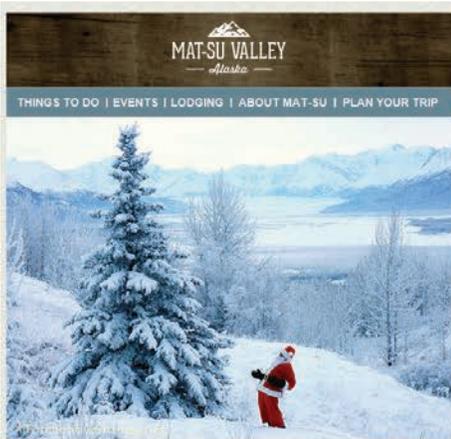
I authorize Mat-Su CVB to charge \$\_\_\_\_\_ to my Visa/MC/Amex

Account number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized signature: \_\_\_\_\_

You can pay by check by mailing to: **Mat-Su CVB**  
 610 S. Bailey St., Suite 201  
 Palmer, AK 99645

## New e-mail campaign launches



### Happy Holidays from Alaska!

Happy holidays from the Mat-Su Valley! This time of year is a great time to reflect and rejoice. The holiday season is also a great time for families to start planning their vacations. Is this the year you choose to come to Alaska for the first time? Or have you been here before but are itching to come back? Either way, we'd love to see you in 2017! [Make your Alaska dream come true in 2017 »](#)



### Get your free guide

The Mat-Su Visitor Guide is brand new for 2017, and it's filled with information about things to do, what to see and where to stay. And best of all, it's free! Whether you want to flightsee around Denali or trek on Matanuska Glacier, this is the guide for you.

[REQUEST A FREE GUIDE](#)

### Destination spotlight: Wasilla

Wasilla is the largest town in the Mat-Su Valley and is home to many attractions such as the Iditarod Trail headquarters, the Dorothy Page Museum, the Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry and much more. There are many excellent restaurants and shopping opportunities as well.

[EXPLORE WASILLA](#)

### Public Use Cabins

Looking for a backcountry adventure in the Mat-Su Valley? Try one of the low cost Alaska State Parks Public Use Cabins! [Learn more »](#)



### Plan around an event

The Mat-Su Valley is home to many events throughout the year. From Colony Christmas and the Iditarod in the winter to the Alaska State Fair and Colony Days during the summer, there's always something fun and exciting taking place.



[ANNUAL EVENTS](#)

MAT-SU CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU  
610 S Bailey St., Suite 201 | Palmer, AK 99645  
[www.alaskavisit.com](http://www.alaskavisit.com) | (907) 746-5000

This email was sent to [jim@alaskavisit.com](mailto:jim@alaskavisit.com).  
You are receiving this because you signed up on our website.

If you would like to stop receiving emails from us, please feel free to [unsubscribe](#).

The Mat-Su CVB launched an all-new e-mail marketing campaign this fall, delivering content to visitors who opt in to receive information about the Mat-Su Valley.

The e-mail marketing program mirrors the web site's look and functionality and was built to be responsively designed, meaning the display scales to the device a visitor is using to read the message.

"In each e-mail, there will be a spotlight on one of the communities in the Mat-Su Valley, an activity or event, and a focus on our visitor guide," said Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB. "They are brief introductions with links to our site."

The goal is to not only raise awareness of the Valley and the many things to see and do, but also to drive traffic back to the web site, to keep them engaged and exposed to even more information.

"With the web site redesign, this was a natural next step," Ressler said. "It's another tool we have to reach potential visitors and give them more reasons to choose the Mat-Su Valley during their Alaska vacations."

The e-mail marketing campaign was part of the redesign process of the web site.

"We have been talking about starting an e-mail marketing program, and it all worked seamlessly with the redesign," Ressler said.

The platform being used for implementation also includes robust reporting capabilities, giving the CVB the opportunity to track engagement, web site clicks, reach, open rates and more.

"It provides us a clear picture of what content appeals to consumers," Ressler said.

Consumer e-mail newsletters are being distributed on the first of every month. If you'd like to be included on the list to receive e-mails, visit <http://www.alaskavisit.com/plan-your-trip/e-newsletter-sign-up/>

For more information about the e-mail marketing program, interested members can contact Ressler at [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com).

At left is the December consumer e-mail that was sent Dec. 1.

## CVB web site wins award

The Mat-Su CVB was recently honored with a Silver Award in the tourism category in the W3 Awards, a national competition that honors creative excellence on the web, and recognizes the creative and marketing professionals behind award winning web sites and online marketing programs.

In its 11th year, the W3 awards received more than 5,000 entries in numerous categories. The awards are sanctioned and judged by the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts, on a 100-point scale. Less than 10 percent of all entries earn a Gold award, and other outstanding entries are selected as Silver awards winners.

"We were excited to hear about the award, because a lot of time and effort went into making the redesign a success," said Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB. The Mat-Su CVB launched its web site, [www.alaskavisit.com](http://www.alaskavisit.com), in May.

## Member extranet coming soon

In the next few weeks, members are going to have more options than ever before to update their website listings, add photos, access leads and more, as "Extranet 4.0" is rolled out.

The extranet is a portal to the Mat-Su CVB database, and is where information for the member listings on the web site are pulled from. The new interface is much more user friendly, and give members the power to keep their listings fresh.

"The new extranet is a big improvement and we're looking forward to launching it," said Mat-Su CVB Membership Manager Justin Saunders.

One nice component of the new extranet is the opportunity to receive leads from the web site in batches, rather than in individual e-mails.

"That's something that members have asked about for a while now, and with the new extranet, we finally are able to do that," Saunders said.

A full announcement will be made in an e-bulletin to members once the new extranet officially launches. For more information, interested members can contact Saunders at [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

# Tourism industry calendar of events

Dec. 26-Jan. 2	Mat-Su CVB office closed for the holidays	
Jan. 10-11	Mat-Su CVB Board Retreat	Sheep Mountain Lodge
Jan. 14-17	American Bus Association Marketplace Mat-Su CVB will attend and have appointments	Cleveland, OH
Jan. 20	Mat-Su CVB January Membership Luncheon	Evangelo's, Noon
Feb. 10	Mat-Su CVB February Membership Luncheon	Turkey Red, Noon
Feb. 25-28	National Travel Association Travel Exchange Mat-Su CVB will attend and take appointments	St. Louis, MO
March 6-10	ITB Berlin Mat-Su CVB is participating with 9 other Alaska destinations/businesses	Berlin, Germany
March 10	Mat-Su CVB March Membership Luncheon "Extranet 4.0: How You Can Stand Out"	Turkey Red, Noon
March 24-26	Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Menard Sports Center
March 25	Alaska Summer Showcase Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Location TBA
March 30-April 2	Great Alaska Sportsman Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Sullivan Arena
April 14	Mat-Su CVB April Membership Luncheon	Talkeetna
April 21-23	Fairbanks Outdoors Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Carlson Center
April 28	Mat-Su CVB Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza	Evangelo's, 6 p.m.

## Save the date!

# The "ExTRAVELganza is right around the corner

Mark your calendars now - the popular Mat-Su CVB Wine & Beer Tasting and Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza is set for April 28 at Evangelo's.

The event, which sells out, features great food, drinks and entertainment, as well as deals on travel packages, goods from local merchants and artwork.

"The travel auction is a fun event every year, and it's our largest fundraiser," said Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB membership manager and the organizer of the event. "We couldn't make it so successful without the help of our generous donor and sponsors."

Donation and sponsorship requests will go out after

the first of the year. Donating to the travel auction or sponsoring it is a great way to get exposure for your business.

There are several silent auction tables with items up for bid, and a live auction closes the evening.

Once again, the Mat-Su CVB will be selling luggage tags raffle tickets for \$20. Each tag enters you to win two round-trip tickets on Alaska Airlines. You don't have to attend the ExTRAVELganza to win the luggage tag raffle prize.

For more information about the travel auction, interested members can contact Saunders at [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).



*The staff of the Mat-Su CVB wishes you the happiest of holidays*

YAHOO!  
**Mat-Su**

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