

The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Fall 2016

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The annual meeting on Nov. 4 is a great opportunity to network and provide feedback to the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors.

Annual meeting, awards luncheon and DestinationNEXT highlight November

The Mat-Su CVB is hosting its annual membership meeting and the Stars of the Industry awards luncheon on Nov. 4 at Evangelo's.

Traditionally, the event has also included an educational workshop. This year, that workshop will be held on Monday, Nov. 7 at the Government Peak Chalet, featuring DestinationNEXT, facilitated by DMAI. Members are encouraged to attend both days.

"We're very excited about the DestinationNEXT session – it's a way to accurately analyze what our destination offers, what challenges we face and how we can work together to advance our destination in the years to come," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

There is no cost to attend the DestinationNEXT workshop. Light refreshments will also be served.

For more information about the DestinationNEXT program, see Quill's report on Page 3 and Page 9.

The annual business meeting begins at 11 a.m. on Nov. 4 at Evangelo's. This important meeting is where the new board of directors will be seated. The Mat-Su CVB staff will also give a report on the efforts of the past year, as well as programs in the future.

The meeting also gives members the opportunity to address the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors with their thoughts, concerns and ideas. If a quorum of the membership is established, votes on issues can be brought to the floor by the membership.

Following the annual business meeting, the Stars of the Industry will be honored during the luncheon. Nominations are being accepted through Oct. 14 and you can find a nomination form on Page 10 of the newsletter.

Tickets for the annual awards luncheon are \$20 and can be purchased by calling Justin Saunders at 746-5032 or by e-mailing him at Justin@alaskavisit.com.

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From the president's desk

Board advocates for tourism infrastructure development

The members of the Mat-Su CVB board of directors come from all walks of life, all corners of the region and represent a wide variety of businesses. When you bring together 10 people from such diverse backgrounds, you are going to have varying opinions on any issue – and the potential 3 percent increase in the bed tax as a funding mechanism for the Gateway Visitor Center proved to be no different.

I'm very proud of the way the board has represented the membership through discussion regarding the issue. Conversations we had in the board room were difficult at times, yet always professional and courteous. As a board, we had varying opinions, much like the membership as a whole. Ultimately, after a vote to move the bed tax increase to the Mat-Su Borough Assembly passed the board of directors, we had one voice and spoke in unity, as a board should always do.

Before taking it to the assembly, however, Gov. Bill Walker announced massive cuts to the state budget that ultimately impacted the Mat-Su Borough.

At a special board meeting in late July, the Mat-Su CVB board decided it would not be appropriate to tie a bed tax increase to the construction of the Gateway Visitor Center during this economic downturn. Instead, the board wanted to take a proactive approach to tourism development and voted to dedicate any increase in the bed tax to infrastructure developments throughout the Mat-Su Borough, from Trapper Creek to Lake Louise.

The board saw this as a way to help communities with projects such as trail development, traffic congestion, signage and more – things that enhance the tourists' and residents' experience, as well

as make the areas more marketable, which in turn helps grow tourism.

We felt this was a plan that would appeal to the outlying communities because they would see immediate benefit as funding would be available for infrastructure projects.

Ultimately, the Assembly voted 4-3 to not put a potential bed tax increase on the general election ballot. The board of directors was disappointed with the result, but respects and appreciates the decision. We always knew there would be challenges along the way, and we respect the opinions of the opposition, including some of our own members.

The important thing to remember through this entire discussion is the Mat-Su CVB has always been 100 percent committed to marketing the Mat-Su Valley as a premier destination, and that will

not change. From the upper reaches of the Susitna Valley to the far-reaching end of the Matanuska Valley, our borough has something for everyone and we are fully committed in marketing those recreational opportunities to travelers.

Whether you were in favor of a bed tax increase or opposed to it, one thing holds true - we are one team, together, working to make and expand the Valley as a destination for Alaska visitors, because we know what kind of a positive economic impact tourism has throughout our community.

Our mission is to "Grow Tourism" and that is something we can all agree is important.

Cheryl Metiva is the president of the board of directors for the Mat-Su CVB. She is the Alaska Marketing Director for the Valley Cinema and Extreme Fun Center owned by Coming Attractions Theatres.



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

Check out the all-new www.alaskavisit.com

From the executive director

DestinationNEXT is the first step in the future of tourism

Think about your most recent vacation trip and the pleasant memories you reflect on when you return. The photos portray beautiful scenery and adventure activities with family and friends. But behind the images and itineraries are thoughtful decisions your destination has developed to create a positive experience for your visit. How easy was it to plan your visit? Was it easy to get around your destination and find your way with helpful signage? Was it clean and provide public restrooms? Did you feel safe? Did the destination make you feel welcome and embrace the visitor industry? These are all key factors in developing a successful visitor destination.

One of the biggest takeaways from the past year and our outreach to

members has been the acknowledgement of insufficient tourism infrastructure and prioritization. Most of the Mat-Su Borough is rural and recreation oriented, that is a key reason people choose to visit, but they also desire basic infrastructure for their experience. There are vast distances between our communities and diverse partners in our visitor industry. How do we collaborate and prioritize what will make our destination more attractive to grow visitation?

The Mat-Su CVB board of directors has decided to lead this discussion and researched a new initiative developed by Destination Marketing

Association International (DMAI) titled DestinationNEXT. In short it is a diagnostic tool designed to assist DMOs to do an objective self-assessment which can help them determine priorities and strategies for the future.

DMAI reports, "This assessment is the only type of its kind in the tourism industry today. It has been recognized as one of the most significant tourism developments in 2015 in the world and has become widely accepted as a best practice in planning and policy work."

As the Mat-Su CVB celebrates its 30-year anniversary in 2016 we recognize



Bonnie Quill

See DESTINATION NEXT, Page 9

Nominations being sought for potential board members

The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors is accepting nominations from the membership to fill three seats coming up for election in October.

The board of directors typically meets 6-8 times a year, as well as a few special meetings as needed. Ten members serve three-year terms and help shape the direction of the Mat-Su CVB.

"Serving on the board of directors is a way to help guide the entire tourism industry into the future," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. "The board serves as the leadership of the membership."

Current members of the board of directors whose terms are up are Zack Steer of A2Z Consult (formerly of Sheep Mountain Lodge), Travis Taylor of Premier Alaska Tours and Mark Austin of the Palmer Musk Ox Farm.

Self-nominations are accepted, and nominations are reviewed by a committee prior to the ballots being issued. Interested members should submit a declaration of candidacy by e-mailing bonnie@alaskavisit.com no later than Sept. 28.

By Oct. 3, candidates should

"Serving on the board of directors is a way to help guide the entire tourism industry into the future."

*- Bonnie Quill,
Executive Director*

submit a 300-word statement and a color photograph, both of which will appear in the ballot packets mailed to all voting members no later than Oct. 8. Ballots remained sealed until the election committee meets on Nov. 1 to open and count them.

The six board members whose terms are not up for election include Cheryl Metiva of the Extreme Fun Center, Karen Harris of Alaska Garden Gate B&B, Cole Ouellette of K2 Aviation, Roberta Caenepel of Explore Tours, Israel Mahay of Mahay's Jet Boat Adventures, Craig Saunders of Iditarod Trailside Lodging and Mark Fleenor of Sheep Mountain Lodge.

For more information on running for the board of directors, interested members can contact Quill at 746-5000.

Mat-Su CVB moves office

The Mat-Su CVB moved its offices from the Visitor Information Center to downtown Palmer June 1, as construction on a medical facility is set to begin at the old site.

The Mat-Su Borough sold the property where the VIC was to Spring Creek, a developer from Idaho who is building an extended-care facility adjacent to Mat-Su Regional Medical Center. Funds from the sale of the property are part of a long-term vision of a new Gateway Visitor Center.

The Mat-Su CVB is now located at 610 S. Bailey St., Suite 201, in downtown Palmer – the Fosselman Building. While the CVB isn't operating the visitor center, its commitment to marketing the Mat-Su Valley does not change.

"Operating the Visitor Center was one part of our overall mission, and that's to grow tourism," said Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su CVB's executive director. "Our marketing plan and strategy is designed to inspire and attract visitors to the Mat-Su Valley, and that will continue to be our top priority."

The CVB was at the old location for nearly 30 years.

"We came across a lot of amazing pictures, documents, newspapers and more when we were packing up," Quill said. "This year, the CVB is celebrating its 30th anniversary and we're going to put together a lot of these highlights we found into a printed piece for our members."

New web site takes advantage of latest technologies

The Mat-Su CVB launched an all-new responsive design web site May 19 after a six-month redesign effort. Featuring large, bold images and ease of navigation, the new site better connects potential visitors with members, and provides them with information about all things Mat-Su.

The site, designed by Simpleview Inc. – the world's leading destination web site developers – is responsive, meaning it scales to display optimally on desktop, tablet and smartphone screens.

"We're very happy with the way the new site looks, and perhaps even more importantly, how it performs," said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB's marketing manager. "The responsive site takes advantage of the latest design trends and best practices. It looks great, and we've had a lot of positive comments from users."

The new site relies heavily on visuals, from the typography and icons to larger photos. Also enhanced were member listings – every member can upload images that display larger than ever before, as well as a longer narrative, lists of amenities and much more.

The switch to a responsive was important not just from a functionality standpoint. It was important from a marketing standpoint as well.

"Having a responsive web site is an absolute must for search engine optimization now," Ressler said. "With every Google search ranking update, having a mobile-friendly web site is more and more important."

The new site also launched with a new partnership between the Mat-Su CVB and Destination Travel Network. Through this agreement, members have the opportunity to purchase display or text ads on the site for the first time.

"Destination Travel Network handles all the ad sales and design, and the CVB gets a portion of the revenue," Ressler explained. "It gives our members another opportunity to gain exposure on the site."

The Mat-Su CVB also launched an e-mail marketing platform in conjunction with the web site redesign. The new e-mail template is also responsively designed, and will be used for member e-bulletins, as well as marketing to consumers who opt in to receive monthly updates about the Mat-Su Valley.

"Everything is designed so it works together - the look and feel of e-mail marketing platform mirrors that of the web site, and the functionality ties into the site as well," Ressler said.



Welcome to Mat-Su Valley Alaska

The views of Denali and unspoiled wilderness are grand, the lifestyle simple and there are no limits on adventure. Mat-Su, Alaska has it all!

Convenient to both Anchorage and Denali National Park, easily reached by car or the Alaska Railroad, the Matanuska-Susitna Valley sprawls across 23,000 square miles of pure Alaska wilderness.

Towering mountains, huge glacier valleys, fish-filled rivers and lakes, abundant Alaska wildlife, glorious hiking country, scenic camping and quaint frontier communities - the Mat-Su is what Alaska visitors dream about.

Order the free official [Mat-Su Visitor Guide](#), check out the suggested [Alaska itineraries](#) and vacation packages, lodges, cabins, hotels/B&Bs, attractions and activities listed on this site within [Vacation Fundamentals](#).

Matanuska-Susitna Valley



The all-new AlaskaVisit.com launched on May 19. The responsive design site was created by Simpleview, the international leader in DMO web sites.

Representatives from Simpleview traveled to the Mat-Su Valley last fall to explore and get a feel for the area.

They used their experiences and observations in the design process, so that

the site accurately represents the Mat-Su Valley.

For more information about the new web site, interested members can contact Ressler at casey@alaskavisit.com.

Introducing ag tours to Japan



On Sept. 1, Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler joined Visit Anchorage's Japanese contractor Takako Nambu on a tour with Alaska Farm Tours. One of the newest Mat-Su CVB members, Alaska Farm Tours offers tours of several local farms, complete with an Alaska Grown lunch. Nambu also flew to Caribou Lodge during her time in the Mat-Su Valley. Visit Anchorage brought Nambu to Southcentral Alaska so she could experience some of the new products in the area, and help market those experiences to tour operators, travel agents and media in Japan.

Adventure highlighted during upcoming summit

The Mat-Su CVB is participating in the Adventure World Travel Summit held in Anchorage in late September, showcasing the Valley as a prime destination for eco-tourism.

The four-day summit features tour operators and travel writers from around the world, with an emphasis on eco-friendly and adventure tourism.

In addition to attending the summit and being a prime sponsor, the Mat-Su CVB is hosting a Day of Adventure on Sept. 19, which will highlight Hatcher Pass and dog mushing tours.

"It's an amazing opportunity that the summit is being held in Anchorage, because Alaska in general, and the Valley specifically, has so much to offer," Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler said. "We're excited to host the group."

Prior to the summit's official start on Sept. 19, several local tour operators and businesses are hosting pre-summit adventures in the Mat-Su Valley. These trips are several days and highlight activities throughout the Mat-Su Valley. Other pre-summit adventures are being held around Alaska, as a way for attendees to explore new opportunities in the 49th state.

"We have some amazing partners who have really gone out of their way to help showcase the Valley through the pre-summit adventures and the Day of Adventure trips," Ressler said.

The summit is being held in the United States for the first time in over a decade. Visit Anchorage worked hard to bring the summit to Alaska. Several Alaskans attended last year's event in Chile to garner excitement for this year's summit. Other recent sites of the summit include Namibia and Ireland.

This marks the second international tourism event Anchorage has hosted this year. In February, Go West held its annual convention in Anchorage, and the Mat-Su CVB participated with a four-day "Yahoo, Mat-Su" FAM trip that included glacier trekking, flight seeing, Hatcher Pass and much more. Go West attendees are international tour operators who offer packages in the western United States.

"These two events have given us an opportunity to not only talk about Alaska to tour operators and media, but to actually get them out and see what we have to offer, first-hand," Ressler said. "Having them experience these products themselves, and seeing our area, is instrumental in attracting more business."

Stay connected to tell our story!



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"yahoomatsu" channel

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Mat-Su Borough Assembly candidates survey

Each fall, the Mat-Su CVB surveys all candidates for the Mat-Su Borough Assembly about issues and topics that impact the tourism industry.

This year, there are three candidates running for two open seats - District 1 and District 2.

The candidates for District 1 are incumbent Jim Sykes and challenger Brian Endle.

In District 2, incumbent Matthew Beck is running unopposed.

Members, and the general public, will have a chance to ask the candidates questions at the Sept. 9 Mat-Su Borough Candidate Forum, which starts at noon at Evangelo's.

Written questions will be accepted from the attendees, and each candidate will have an opportunity to answer.

Question 1

As with most local and regional convention & visitors bureaus, the Mat-Su CVB receives monies collected by the Borough through a bed tax of 5 percent. This year the administration approved during budget deliberations an appropriation of \$747,500 for fiscal year 2017 for the Mat-Su CVB. This equates to 65% of the projected transient accommodations tax (bed tax) collection of \$1.15 million. The assembly three years ago supported action to extend the existing grant agreement with the Mat-Su CVB for three years through FY16 with the above formula. Do you support renewing a 3-year grant agreement with the Mat-Su CVB? Why or why not?

Jim Sykes, District 1 candidate: Favor a one-year extension, due to the need to figure a way to restructure current spending that takes the governor's vetoes into account. We need to expect future state budget shortfalls as we create the FY18 budget.

Brian Endle, District 1 candidate: **Undecided.** I am in favor of the direct use of tax money fed into the purpose for which it is collected. The industry's money collected through taxes is being used to support the Mat-Su CVB. To that point, I am in favor of this agreement. Overall, I am not in favor of the taxation of the industry and use of government to collect the taxes and redistribute them as they wish. I will be evaluating additional information on this topic to make as informed of a decision as possible

Matthew Beck, District 2 candidate:

Favor. The Mat-Su CVB is a strong partner with the Borough and works diligently to build our vital tourism infrastructure and industry.

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?

Jim Sykes, District 1 candidate: Favor expenditure of funds mainly for tourism purposes because almost anything we do for tourists benefits people who live here in healthy ways. Tourists also use our roads, sewers and emergency services and other infrastructure. It's fair to ask them to help support impacts on those services.

Brian Endle, District 1 candidate:

Oppose. I'm not in favor of taxing without a direct purpose for the monies collected. I would want to ensure the money gets spent for its intended purpose.

Matthew Beck, District 2 candidate: Oppose.

Question 3

The 2008 Tourism Infrastructure Needs Study identified the Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center development as a top priority that would have a major economic impact for the Valley. After a National Scenic Byways grant-funded feasibility study in 2010, a site at Mile 36 Glenn Highway was identified (we encourage you to visit www.matsuvallyvisitorcenter.com). In FY14 the Mat-Su Borough received \$1 million from the Alaska legislature for site acquisition, and in FY15 received \$1.235 million for design and site work, through the efforts of the Mat-Su CVB. The assembly has listed the project as one of its top five legislative priorities. The sale of the current center of \$1.2 million is dedicated as a match for the \$5.8 million needed to complete the project. Do you support the development of a new Mat-Su Gateway Visitor Center? Why or why not?

Jim Sykes, District 1 candidate: Support, but I think that the Gateway Visitor Center should be delayed, along with other major capital projects that lack funding. Health and safety infrastructure needs are priorities during budget

shortfalls.

Brian Endle, District 1 candidate:

If industry is supplying the matching funds, and the grant is awarded, I see no reason for the Assembly to not support the effort. If the Assembly needs to guarantee the matching funds, it would have to be carefully considered in relation to the existing economic environment. The idea of a 501c3 collecting monies that are tax deductible from industry seems very promising and I'd be interested in that idea as it develops.

Matthew Beck, District 2 candidate:

I strongly support the development of the new Mat-Su Gateway Visitor Center. The new location couldn't be better. Now is the time to build tourism infrastructure. The Mat-Su is becoming a primary destination in the state and the visitor center is vital to helping that continue to happen.

Question 4

On Aug. 2, 2016 the assembly heard testimony during a public hearing on an ordinance to increase the borough bed tax from five to eight percent and submit the question to the voters on the October 4, 2016 ballot. The Mat-Su CVB board of directors had forwarded the proposal to consider after much feedback and discussions with the membership. The testimony was divided and the assembly voted 4-3 to oppose putting it on the ballot. What is your opinion on raising the bed tax to support tourism infrastructure projects or the completion of the Gateway Visitor Center facility?

Jim Sykes, District 1 candidate: I voted to put the bed tax issue on the 2016 ballot but ended up on the losing side. For now the issue is a moot point. I still support the idea and believe that a rise in bed tax money should be prioritized for tourism infrastructure projects and to help support services and infrastructure that tourism impacts. We need to have the cleanest restrooms in the country and be able to keep some of them open and functioning in the winter – like on the way to Fairbanks or Glennallen. Trailhead facilities should also be a priority, which are currently included on a ballot proposal that I voted to go on the ballot and the people vote. Tourism will continue to be a bright spot in the Mat-Su economy that brings public benefit and we need to continue supporting it.

CANDIDATES: Respond to tourism questions

Continued from Page 6

Brian Endle, District 1 candidate: In the Aug. 2, 2016 Assembly discussion on the bed tax increase, I saw that the tax would actually be unfavorable for some that the tax was reported to support.

I would not be in favor of this type of division.

Matthew Beck, District 2 candidate: I'm extremely disappointed this failed. I argued in favor of putting it before the voters. Then I would have argued strongly in support of the increase, but would have fully supported what was decided by the voters.

No one looks at the amount of bed tax when choosing a place to stay. A slight increase would have NO effect on the amount of visitors to the borough or on the amount they would spend here. They come here expecting to pay money, just like travelers do any place else in the world.

I doubt that the larger businesses from outside Alaska will take any steps to work with the Mat-Su CVB to build the Gateway Visitor Center or other tourism infrastructure in the Mat-Su beyond their own self-propagating, financial interests. I believe they fear the business they might lose when people realize there are other, more attractive and affordable

options to enjoy the beauty of this place. It is corporate interests motivating them. Don't get me wrong, large companies are great for Alaska and support many local businesses through the people they attract, but I don't expect them to support what they see as something too small for them, as the Gateway Visitor Center.

But that little place can have profound impacts here. I believe every RV that drives along the Glenn Highway will stop at the Gateway Visitor Center and it will be an important way to point travelers to the tourism hot spots such as the Reindeer Farm, Government Peak Chalet recreation area, Hatcher Pass, Lazy Mountain Trailhead, Pyrah's Pioneer Peak Farm, the Little Susitna Boat Landing and other awesome destinations in the Mat-Su, overlooked by the large corporations that have already found a niche and are working to protect their interests and income, understandably so. Those who spoke against the increased bed taxes don't want to share the opportunity to attract and welcome the visitors to this place. There's a bigger picture to tourism in the Mat-Su and the Mat-Su CVB seems to understand that. It is understandable that the local businesses highly profiting from the larger businesses are looking out for their best interests, but I think tourism is large enough for us to expand tourism opportunities.

Election info

MSB General Election
Tuesday, Oct. 4

On the ballot

District 1 - Jim Sykes and
Brian Endle

District 2 - Matthew Beck

Areawide propositions

Prohibiting marijuana
establishments outside the
cities

Parks and recreation capital
improvement bond

Areawide retail sales tax
of 5% on marijuana and
marijuana products

Take action to support national parks and the economy

This year, the United States is celebrating a milestone - the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the National Park Service.

Aug. 25 was the official celebration for the agency, which manages more than 400 sites representing some of the best natural, cultural, and historic treasures in America. During the centennial, people have been encouraged to #FindYourPark, and post on social media.

Here in Alaska, more people are doing just that, including at Denali National Park and Preserve. That is very good news for businesses and communities throughout the Mat-Su Valley, as Denali visitors spend time and money throughout the Mat-Su Borough.

The National Park Service reported that last year alone there were more than 550,000 visits to Denali. Those guests spent \$560 million in the area, which trickles through the economy to support

more than 7,000 local jobs, creating even more in indirect spending.

But the national parks' popularity also highlights a problem. One hundred years after the National Park Service's creation, many of our parks are showing their age. Crumbling roads, rotting historic buildings, impassable trails, outdated public buildings, and safety hazards are all part of an estimated \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog.

At Denali National Park and Preserve alone, an estimated \$53 million is needed for repairs.

Despite aging infrastructure and record visitation, unreliable congressional funding means park superintendents have to work with a shoestring budget to manage and often delay important repairs.

The Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau's board of directors recognizes the importance of the national parks to our local economy.

That is why they have signed a letter of support to our congressional delegation, spearheaded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, asking lawmakers to ensure that the National Park System has the resources to protect and maintain our national parks for visitors and generations to come.

Please join the Mat-Su CVB, and hundreds of businesses and organizations throughout the country, in signing on to the "Restore America's Parks" letter. Your participation will demonstrate the collective power of the tourism industry and business community in the Mat-Su Valley.

Together, we can help #FixOurParks, here and across the country.

Note: This article was submitted by Yaron Miller of the National Parks Campaign. The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors voted to sign a letter of support for National Parks Service.

Member events kick off with candidate forum

The first membership luncheon and networking opportunity of the fall is Sept. 9 at noon at Evangelo's, featuring the annual Mat-Su Borough Assembly Candidate Forum. Additionally, Sarah Leonard from the Alaska Travel Industry Association will be on hand to give an update on state tourism marketing efforts.

The luncheon is an opportunity to learn about how local politicians feel about local tourism issues, as well as statewide efforts.

"People will have the opportunity to not only ask local candidates questions that impact their business, but also learn about what the state is doing to market Alaska during a challenging time with drastically reduced tourism marketing funds," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

The program is free and open to the public, and the optional lunch is payable directly to Evangelo's.

There's also an opportunity to have the luncheon pay for you – ATIA is giving away a complimentary registration to the 2016 state tourism convention in Anchorage in early October.

"Membership luncheons are a good opportunity for members to network and learn about what other members are doing at their businesses," Mat-Su CVB Membership Manager Justin Saunders said. "If you haven't been to a luncheon before, come on out and introduce yourselves - it could lead to referrals and help your business grow."

For more information about membership events, interested members can contact Saunders at Justin@alaskavisit.com.

Win an ATIA convention registration!

Sarah Leonard of the Alaska Travel Industry Association has donated a \$475 convention registration to be given out at the September 9 luncheon! Don't miss out - RSVP today!

Family travel writer visits Talkeetna



Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB hosted travel writer Jen Reyneri and her family for a day in Talkeetna. Reyneri specializes in family travel and writes for WordTraveling.com and Trekaroo. This summer, the Mat-Su CVB assisted and/or hosted writers from Germany, Japan and the United States.

2017 Visitor Guide available soon

The 2017 Mat-Su CVB Visitor Guide will be published in mid-October, and will be available to members at the annual meeting on Nov. 4 at Evangelo's.

The guide is once again being designed by Solstice Advertising in Anchorage, and will feature a Denali image on the cover.

"The Visitor Guide is a great marketing tool and every member is represented in it," said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB's marketing manager. "There are new photos throughout this year's guide, along with an 'adventure' theme."

This year, 100,000 copies of the guide will be printed. Of those, 60,000 will be mailed to high-potential leads identified through Alaska Travel Industry Association online marketing efforts. These people have indicated they are very interested in visiting Alaska.

The remainder are distributed throughout Alaska at visitor centers, direct mailed to those who request them from the CVB web site and used in various marketing programs, including at outdoor shows.

"We like to have them available by the beginning of November each year, because that's when folks are starting to plan their vacations and requesting information," Ressler said. "We want them to have the guide in their hands during that process."

Every member will receive a copy of the 2017 Visitor Guide, along with a copy of the Mat-Su CVB FY16 Annual Report, in the mail this fall.

If you'd like additional copies for your visitors or your business, call the Mat-Su CVB office at 746-5000 and we can arrange for you to receive as many as you'd like.



DestinationNEXT

Continued from Page 3

the opportunity of this new destination development tool to guide and grow our tourism success. Since its inception in October 2015 the DestinationNEXT database includes 230 destinations and completed over 50 detailed assessments. Mat-Su CVB is partnering with Visit Anchorage to host DestinationNEXT and conduct a workshop on Nov. 7 at the Government Peak Chalet from 8:30-11:30 a.m.

Prior to the workshop we will conduct 75 online assessment surveys with key stakeholders to gain feedback on 20 DestinationNEXT variables for destination strength and community support and engagement.

Within each variable, a series of metrics are also identified which offer the opportunity for DMOs to gather data and provide a more in-depth look at the variable. The results will be analyzed with a scenario plot and a detailed diagnostics report provided. The workshop will be facilitated by Paul Ouimet, DMAI's Managing Director of DestinationNEXT who will review the results of the assessment and discuss key issues and strategic implications and follow-up actions.

I encourage you to add the November 7th workshop to your schedule and participate in this important discussion. You can learn more about DestinationNEXT at www.destinationmarketing.org/destinationnext

Mat-Su CVB hosts Matador Network



Photographer Justin Bilancieri shoots a picture from Hatcher Pass last weekend. Mat-Su CVB hosted Bilancieri on a four-day, Mat-Su only familiarization trip that included stops from Glacier View to Talkeetna and everywhere in between. Bilancieri was on assignment for the Matador Network, an online media company that has been ranked by Skift as one of the top 25 consumer travel media sites in the world and "the most successful media brand on social media [in the travel industry]."

Announcing the first Mat-Su CVB photo contest

Want your business to be "Instagram famous?" Here's your chance!

The Mat-Su CVB is hosting its first photo contest for members. All you have to do is e-mail the best images from around the Valley to casey@alaskavisit.com, before Nov. 3!



We'll be giving away a \$100 gift certificate to Turkey Red for the best submission, at our annual meeting on Nov. 4 (need not be present to win, but we'd love to see you there!)

The Mat-Su CVB will be using the submitted images for our Instagram account, [matsulleyak](https://www.instagram.com/matsulleyak), and potentially for other uses on social media channels.

Don't miss out - send in your best images today!

Stars of the Industry award nominations accepted

Nominations are being accepted for the annual Mat-Su CVB Stars of the Industry awards luncheon, for those who have made a positive difference in the tourism industry in the last year.

The luncheon is held in conjunction with the annual meeting on Nov. 4 at Evangelo's.

The Northern Lights Award honors a community in the Mat-Su Borough that has distinguished itself for outstanding tourism promotion and/or development. Last year, the Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce took the award.

The Gold Star Award recognizes a

business or organization that has made significant accomplishments in the tourism industry. In 2015, the honoree K2 Aviation for their long-time success.

The Tourism Angel Award honors an individual who has supported and assisted Mat-Su CVB and has shown a true concern for the success and growth of the tourism industry. Last year, Diana Lambernakis of Evangelo's was honored for her efforts in assisting tour groups during the Sockeye Fire in 2015.

The Cheechako Award is given to a new business or organization that has shown entrepreneurial zeal and managed

to not only survive, but thrive in its early years. Palmer City Ale House was last year's honoree.

There are also a few awards that don't get handed out every year. The "It Happens" award is given to an individual or organization that has taken lemons and turned them into lemonade. It is intended to laugh with, not at, the winners.

Nominations can be made by using the form below.

Members can fax the form to 746-2688 or e-mail nominations to Justin@alaskavisit.com. The deadline for nominations is Oct. 14.

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! Submit nominations to Mat-Su CVB by Oct. 14. Mat-Su CVB; 610 S. Bailey St., Suite 201.; Palmer, AK 99645; Fax (907) 746-2688

Tourism industry calendar of events

Sept. 9	Mat-Su CVB Membership Luncheon Mat-Su Borough Candidate Forum, plus a special presentation from the Alaska Travel Industry Association, including an update on tourism marketing efforts. ATIA has donated a complimentary registration to the state tourism convention as a door prize.	Noon, Evangelo's (Wasilla)
Sept. 19-23	Adventure World Travel Summit Mat-Su CVB will attend the four-day summit, sponsor a welcoming dinner, as well as host a Day of Adventure for delegates.	Anchorage
Oct. 3-7	Alaska Travel Industry Association state convention Mat-Su CVB will attend	Anchorage
Nov. 4	Mat-Su CVB Annual Business Meeting and awards luncheon Following the annual business meeting, celebrate the Stars of the Industry at the annual Mat-Su CVB awards luncheon. Tickets are available for purchase by calling 746-5000 or Justin@alaskavisit.com.	11 a.m.-1 p.m. Evangelo's
Nov. 7	DestinationNEXT workshop DestinationNEXT will present their findings from a destination analysis, and work with attendees in continuing to move forward in destination development. DestinationNEXT is facilitated by the Destination Marketing Association International.	8:30-11:30 a.m., Government Peak
Nov. 24-25	Thanksgiving holiday	Mat-Su CVB offices will be closed

Welcome to the newest CVB members

Within the Wild Adventure Company
Carl and Kirsten Dixon
(907) 274-2710
www.withinthewild.com

Denali View Raft Adventures
Heather Collins
(907) 733-2778
www.denaliviewraft.com

Mary's McKinley View Lodge
Jean Richardson
(907) 733-1555
www.mckinleyviewlodge.com

Alaska Northern Experience Tours
Marty and Cheryl Metiva
(907) 631-2662
www.alaskanorthernexperience.com

Mat-Su Parks and Trails Foundation
(907) 746-8757
www.matsutrails.org

Made in Alaska
Michael Hanzuck
(907) 269-8150
www.madeinalaska.org

Big Swig Tours
Brian Caenepeel
(907) 268-0872
www.bigswigtours.com

Alaska Farm Tours
Margaret Adsit
(907) 519-7067
www.alaskafarmtours.com

Alaska Hiking and Packrafting
Adventure Guides
Eric Halfacre
(907) 982-2221
www.alaskahikingandpackrafting.com

Alaska Horse Adventures
Joshua Hale
(907) 229-4445
www.alaskahorseadventures.com

Alaska Knotty Pine Bed and Breakfast
Moses Hale
(907) 982-3278
www.alaskaknottypine.com

Gate Creek Cabins
Susie Seibert
(907) 733-1393
www.gatecreekcabins.com

Maclaren River Lodge
Susie Echols
(907) 331-3518
www.maclarenlodge.com

Contact Justin Saunders at justin@alaskavisit.com if you know of someone who should become a member!



Fall colors make the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway a must see.

YAHOO!
Mat-Su

7744 E. Visitors View Ct.
Palmer, AK 99645

(907) 746-5000
www.alaskavisit.com