



The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Winter 2012

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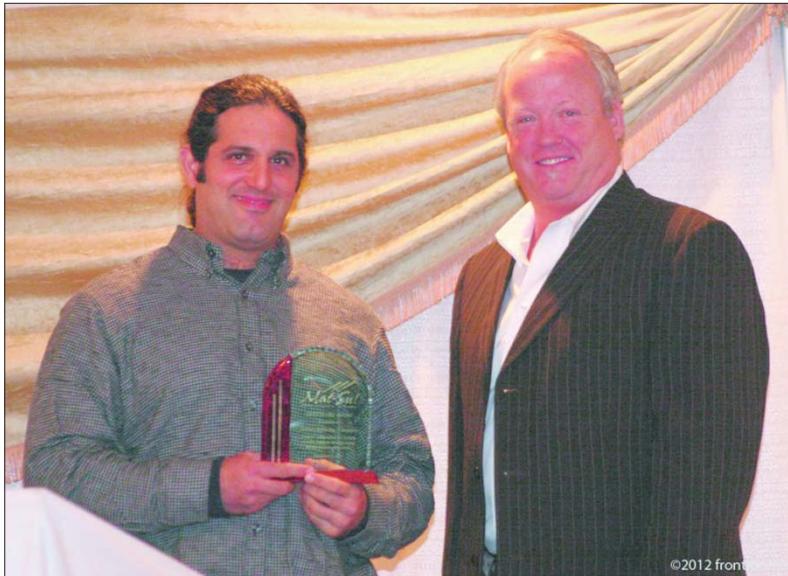
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Sassan Mossanen of Denali Brewing Company accepts the Cheechako Award from Bill Geist at the annual awards luncheon. Photo by The Frontiersman.

Mat-Su CVB members honored at annual awards luncheon

The Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau honored four tourism businesses and organizations during its annual "Stars of the Industry" awards luncheon at Evangelo's Nov. 9, paying tribute to those who excel in the visitor industry.

The Northern Lights Award is given to a community that has distinguished itself for outstanding tourism promotion. This year, the award was given to the Glacier View community for its collective efforts to make the area on the Glenn Highway a destination for visitors.

New tour offerings in the Matanuska Glacier area, including a zip line adventure, have increased activities for visitors in the area.

Local businesses in the area also worked together to construct an informational kiosk near the glacier's entrance, promoting the many roadhouses, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds and attractions visitors encounter, in an effort to extend

their stays in the Glacier View area.

The Tourism Angel award honors an individual who has supported the Mat-Su CVB and the tourism industry and has shown concern for the growth of the industry. This year, longtime Mat-Su CVB board member Dan McDonough was honored. McDonough owns Lifetime Adventures.

"Dan has been a rock for the tourism industry in the Valley for years, and honestly, this award is long overdue," said Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su CVB's executive director. "Dan has helped shape the direction of our marketing effort throughout the years."

The Cheechako Award pays tribute to a relatively new business that has not only survived, but prospered. Denali Brewing Company earned the award this year.

Along with its sister business, Twister

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*The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors
is voted on by the general membership
every October.*

From the president's desk

Strong membership central to Mat-Su CVB's success

At the core of our organization is you – the membership. A strong and active membership is an important part of the Mat-Su CVB, and I encourage you to get involved with the organization to fully realize how important it is to your marketing efforts.

You can get involved in a number of ways. Come to a monthly membership luncheon to meet your peers in the travel industry here in the Mat-Su Valley. Each month, they feature an informative topic and at the very least, you'll leave with more knowledge. But more importantly, you'll have time to network with other business owners, and you can generate a lot of referral businesses through these networks.

If you'd like to have an active voice in the organization, I'd suggest you volunteer to serve on one of the CVB's committees. The marketing, membership and Internet committees meet throughout the year and work to maximize our budget for the benefit of the member businesses. You'll have a say in the direction the Mat-Su CVB takes for the future by joining one of these committees.

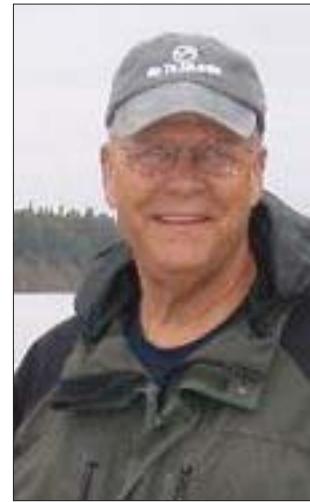
This winter, the membership department is offering a great deal to our members – if you refer a new member to the CVB, you'll get a \$50 credit toward listing enhancements.

We all know of a business owner or two who we could refer to the CVB, and who doesn't need free marketing opportunities? It's a win-win situation – you get free online marketing, and the CVB continues to develop a stronger membership base.

By working together, we can accomplish more than we can independently of one another. This cooperative effort comes from having a strong membership that is informed and involved.

I look forward to serving as the president of the board of directors this year, and representing all of your interests. If you'd like to get more involved, we'd love to have you. Simply give the staff a call at 746-5000. Happy holidays to you all.

Craig Saunders (alaskavvisit@alaska.com) owns Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours and is the president of the board of directors.



Craig Saunders

Expert advice

Paying attention to details helps prevent fraud at your business

Small businesses have lots of details to cover, but protecting yourself from fraud may be one of the most important. One of the easiest things to do also is one of the most important when it comes to fraud protection – paying attention to the details.

Customer and employee awareness are the best ways to prevent fraudulent losses. Make sure your employees are trained to recognize fraud before it happens.

Check fraud is one the rise nationally. According to the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, more than 1.2 million

fraudulent checks are written daily which results in over \$20 billion in losses. When you are presented with a check, make sure you take a few seconds to examine the document thoroughly.

On the checks, there shouldn't be any eraser marks, incomplete information or alterations. Take a second to examine the security features of the check, and that they are all being followed. A simple check of the document may be the thing

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From the executive director

Based on research, 2013 is looking like a great year

Last week I chaired my first meeting of the 2012-2013 Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) marketing committee. I was appointed chair by the ATIA board of directors in October. I share co-chair responsibilities with Kathy Dunn from the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. The marketing committee includes 30 members of the ATIA board of directors and appointed travel industry leaders. The mission of the committee is to develop a comprehensive tourism marketing plan to generate awareness and interest in travel to Alaska.

The two-day meeting began with a number of reports on the current status of the Alaska visitor industry, followed by research on future travel trends.

Visitor volume numbers for summer 2012 were reported by the Dept. of Commerce: total summer visitors 1,586,600 (an increase of 2 percent over 2011); cruise passengers represented 59 percent; air 37 percent; and highway/ferry 4 percent. Cruise passenger traffic increased 6 percent over 2011, but the really worthy news was the increase in land tour volume was up 7 percent after several years of decline.



Bonnie Quill

The international visitor volume we know has increased significantly with the non-stop flights on Condor, Korean Air and Japan Airlines. A new non-stop service on Icelandair begins in May 2013. International air indicators are hard to determine because many will fly domestically to other gateways such as Seattle, San Francisco or Los Angeles before they board an international flight.

Another research report the ATIA contracts is the 2013 Alaska Travel Intentions, which determines the likelihood of travel to Alaska in 2013 and what factors increase or decrease their intention. The phone survey of 600 current and past year inquirers of a state of Alaska Vacation Planner was conducted the first week of December.

The results were 13 percent said they "definitely will go" and 35 percent answered "probably will go." Other questions were asked about whether they had finalized their travel plans and what type of vacation they will most likely take to Alaska (package tour or independent.) In summary, the travel intentions survey compared favorably to previous years reported.

On a national level reports indicate we have reason to be cautiously optimistic

about the travel industry. The economy is improving and the tourism sector was one of the first to improve. Leisure travel has recovered to the 2008 high levels. Total expenditures have nearly recovered to 2008 levels at 95 percent.

The biggest trend is international inbound travel is projected to continue to outperform domestic travel, due to improved visa wait times and border entry visitor experiences.

If you are still with me, the really good news is the governor included \$16 million in his FY14 budget for tourism marketing, announced last week. Along with private industry funds the total tourism budget would be over \$18 million. Well above the lean years of a decade ago, this is a competitive destination campaign.

The five subcommittees of the marketing committee (advertising, public relations, Web site, travel trade and international) will develop a marketing plan between now and March to submit to the Dept. of Commerce that will encourage travel to Alaska and create awareness and interest in Alaska.

As a member and chair of this committee, the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau will benefit from contributing and participating in the process.

Bonnie Quill (bonnie@alaskavist.com) is the executive director of the Mat-Su CVB.

Four candidates retain seats in October elections

The Mat-Su CVB membership returned four incumbent members to the Board of Directors during the annual elections this fall.

Returning to the board were Karen Harris of Alaska Garden Gate B&B, Craig Saunders of Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours, Ruth Kimerer from the Alaska Railroad, and Steve Zadra from Princess Tours.

Dee Dee Kay, of Alaska Heritage Tours, completed her second one-year stint as president of the organization and passed the gavel to Saunders, who will take over as president of the board.

Other officers on the board of directors include Cheryl Metiva (Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman, vice president), Zadra (Princess Tours, secretary) and Nicole

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- Bonnie Quill,
Executive Director, Mat-Su CVB

Bendle (First National Bank Alaska), who will serve as the treasurer once again.

"I'm looking forward to working with Craig in the next year. Craig has had a great positive influence during his time on the board, and he'll bring a great vision to the president position," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. "He has been a leader on the Gateway Visitor Center project."

Kay and Mark Austin of the Palmer Musk Ox Farm round out the executive committee. Other board members include Mabel Wimmer of Mendenalna Creek Lodge and Darlene Hunter of Susitna River Lodge.

Directors are voted on by the membership each October and are seated at the annual meeting the first week of November.

They serve three-year terms on the 10-member board. Each year, three seats are up for reelection, with four board members up for reelection every three election cycles.

For more information, or to be considered as a board candidate in the fall, please contact Quill at bonnie@alaskavist.com or 746-5000.

Aussie mission targets largest international group

The Mat-Su CVB joined seven other Alaska destinations and businesses in promoting tourism to more than 300 travel agents, tour operators and media during the state of Alaska's Down Under sales mission in Australia in early November.

Marketing manager Casey Ressler did presentations in four cities that highlighted the Mat-Su Valley as a destination to include in vacation packages offered by Australian operators and agents.

"Australia is now the top inbound international market for Alaska, and the agents and operators we met were very excited about selling Alaska packages," Ressler said. "There is huge interest in traveling to Alaska from the Aussies, so it was a great opportunity to meet them directly and talk to them about what our area offers."

The sales mission started in Sydney and included stops in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane. In each city, Alaska suppliers met with travel agents during a tradeshow, then gave presentations during a dinner event. In Melbourne and Sydney, individual business-to-business meetings were scheduled to meet with wholesale tour operators.

Australian travel writers attended two of the events as well.

"We've already had contact with one of the writers who is planning to come to the



Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler joined other Alaska organizations in the Alaska Down Under Sales Mission in early November.

Valley next summer," Ressler said.

The state of Alaska holds the Alaska Down Under sales mission every other year, but due to budget cuts, the Mat-Su CVB did not participate in 2010. During November's mission, the Mat-Su

CVB was joined by representatives from Visit Anchorage, the Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council, Fairbanks CVB, Northern Alaska Tour Company, the Alaska Railroad, Alaska Holiday and Alaska Airlines.

Mat-Su CVB meeting with tour operators at ABA, NTA

The Mat-Su CVB is attending two national conventions in January where representatives will meet with tour operators who do business in Alaska.

The American Bus Association Marketplace event is Jan. 5-9 in Charlotte, N.C., and the National Tour Association convention is Jan. 20-25 in Orlando. At both events, Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager Casey Ressler will have prescheduled appointments with tour operators.

"The group tour market is an important one, and these are the two biggest opportunities to connect with key decision makers at national tour companies," Ressler said. "It's a great time to showcase our area."

At both events, destination marketing

organizations research tour companies and request appointments through a database system. This ensures all of the appointments are well qualified.

"We want to meet with operators who are doing business in Alaska, or who are looking to expand their current offerings," Ressler said. "Through these appointments, we can get them in touch with our members who can fill their needs."

If your company has something new or noteworthy that would fit with the group tour market, please let Ressler know. Leads from both conventions will be available to members in mid-February. For more information about either convention, interested members can e-mail casey@alaskavisit.com.

Save the date!

Mark your calendars for April 5, when the Mat-Su CVB's annual wine tasting and travel auction ExTRAVELganza takes place at Evangelo's in Wasilla.

The fundraiser is the largest of the year for the CVB, and each year, the event sells out early. Tickets are available in mid-February for the event. Members will receive donation request forms in January. Each year, donations range from inexpensive items like coffee punch cards, to grand prizes such as a cruise. All donations are valued by the CVB.

For more information, interested people can contact Justin Saunders at justin@alaskavisit.com.

Staff meets with travel media at Road Show

The Mat-Su CVB met with travel writers from around the country during October's Alaska Media Road Show in Santa Barbara, pitching them stories about the Valley during the annual event.

Casey Ressler and Bonnie Quill had prescheduled 15-minute appointments from journalists that range from well-known online bloggers to editors of national magazines.

"Road Show is a great opportunity to develop relationships with media members that leads to positive coverage about our area," Quill said. "We've seen some excellent coverage through the years as a result of meeting journalists at Road Show."

Thompson & Co., the state of Alaska's public relations contractor, screens journalists before inviting them to the event, meaning everyone in attendance is highly qualified and produces coverage.

"Each year, the quality of the journalists seems to get better and better," Ressler said. "You know that the person sitting across the table from you is genuinely interested in Alaska, and is going to produce."

Prior to attending the event, Mat-Su CVB staff researches each journalist so they can develop a perfect "pitch" for the writer and the particular media outlets they work for. Some journalists are writing



Casey Ressler and Bonnie Quill meet with a national travel writer at Alaska Media Road Show in October. The event includes 25 appointments with leading journalists, as well as networking opportunities with up to 50 members of the media.

for high-adventure publications, while others are working on stories for food-related outlets.

"I want to make sure my time with the journalist is as targeted as possible, and that I give the journalist exactly what they

need," Ressler said.

The Mat-Su CVB has attended Road Show for the last 10 years. Other attendees include destination marketing organizations, lodging properties, activity providers and cruise lines.

National and state consumer shows up next on calendar

The Mat-Su CVB will be targeting the consumer market – both in-state and out-of-state – during the first quarter of 2013.

The first consumer show the Mat-Su CVB will attend is the Boston Globe Travel show in early February. In late February, the Mat-Su CVB will attend the Los Angeles Times Travel show. At both consumer shows, staff will be in the state of Alaska booth as a cooperative effort, passing out copies of the Mat-Su Visitor Guide and answering questions.

"The L.A. show is a great one because it's one of the primary markets for Alaska, and it attracts people who aren't just kicking tires, but buying the car," Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB marketing and communications manager, said. "The people we meet there aren't just looking for

"The outdoor shows are important because they are filled with folks looking to get out after a long winter and enjoy some summer recreation. And what better place to do that than the Valley?"

- Casey Ressler,
Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager

general information. In a lot of cases, they already know they are going to visit Alaska and they are looking for very specific information on how to make their trip as successful as possible."

Once March rolls around, the focus turns to the in-state market with three outdoors shows, in Wasilla, Anchorage and Fairbanks.

The Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show is March 22-24, followed by the Great Alaska

Sportsman Show in Anchorage on March 28-31. The Fairbanks Outdoors Show is April 19-21.

"The outdoor shows are important because they are filled with folks looking to get out after a long winter and enjoy some summer recreation," Ressler said. "And what better place to do that than the Valley? We provide information on getaways for Alaskans, local fishing information, maps for hiking and more."

At the three outdoor shows in Alaska, members can have their brochures distributed in the Mat-Su CVB booth for \$25/show.

Make sure you check your e-bulletin in February for more information on how to participate in this cooperative marketing program.

Web site remains a top priority for marketing efforts

The Mat-Su CVB has continued to increase its investment in online marketing annually, an effort that helped the organization reach more than 50,000 potential visitors this year alone.

The online marketing effort is multi-faceted, with money invested in a number of different endeavors, including search engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising, social media marketing and more.

"The Web is the number one tool for visitors to any destination, so it's important to stay ahead of the curve with online marketing," said Casey Ressler, the Mat-Su CVB marketing and communications manager.

From Jan. 1 through the start of December, the Mat-Su CVB Web site, www.alaskavisit.com, received more than 57,000 unique visitors. Those are potential visitors who are seeking more information about the Mat-Su Valley, and making travel decisions.

So how does the CVB reach those potential visitors? Using a targeted Google AdWords campaign is a good start. Each year, the CVB purchases key words relating to the destination that Internet users are typing into searches. The words and phrases are highly targeted, giving us the best reach for the lowest cost possible.



In 2012, the Mat-Su CVB also invested in Facebook advertising for the first time, and the results have been good. More than 2,750 people "like" the Facebook page – "Visit Alaska's Mat-Su Valley" – and user engagement is high. Advertising on social media platforms also helps drive traffic to

the regular Web site through related posts, referrals and more.

"The Internet Committee has worked with our consultant, Kristen Lindsey from Apokrisis, to develop a strategy that is financially responsible, yet gives us the most reach," Ressler said.

New features added to www.alaskavisit.com this fall

The Mat-Su CVB recently added TripAdvisor reviews to member listings online, joining a growing national trend among CVB Web sites.

More than 75 percent of travelers consult TripAdvisor when planning a trip, national studies have indicated.

"The reviews are being sought by travelers, and by integrating them into the Web site, we give visitors more of what they want in a site," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

Members who do not want TripAdvisor reviews on their member listing can opt out of the new service.

They can e-mail casey@alaskavisit.com or justin@alaskavisit.com to have the TripAdvisor link turned off on their listing.

Casey Ressler, marketing manager at the Mat-Su CVB, said it's important for business owners to manage their presence on TripAdvisor regardless of whether they

"The reviews are being sought by travelers, and by integrating them into the Web site, we give visitors more of what they want in a site."

- Bonnie Quill,
Mat-Su CVB Executive Director

have the reviews on the CVB site.

"The reviews are out there online, and more and more travelers are seeing them," Ressler said. "Business owners should be diligent about looking at their reviews and responding to travelers' concerns. It shows engagement and willingness by management to work with customers on their concerns."

If a member doesn't have a TripAdvisor review on their member listing, they can choose to add it by providing the Mat-Su CVB with their TripAdvisor identification number.

Nationally, several hotel chains,

including the Best Western chain, have opted to bring TripAdvisor reviews onto their own Web sites, as a way to give consumers information they are seeking when researching travel plans.

In the next few weeks, a new social media integration project will be launched that brings all of the bureau's social media efforts under one umbrella on the home page. It will also give site visitors the opportunity to "like" the bureau on Facebook (Visit Alaska's Mat-Su Valley), "follow" on Twitter (@visitmatsu) or view YouTube videos.

There will also be a link in the social media widget to the bureau's new blog, which is accessible at www.alaskavisit.com/blog.

"Blogs are great for two reasons - one, they give our visitors relevant information in a more personal way, and two, it greatly helps with search engine optimization," Ressler said.

Refer a member, get a \$50 credit for Web enhancements

This winter, the Mat-Su CVB is offering members a \$50 credit toward Web listing enhancement for referring a new member to the organization.

Every Mat-Su CVB enjoys a free Web listing on www.alaskavist.com, including amenities and two photos, but you can enhance that listing with additional functions simply by referring a new business.

There are options for upgrading your listing. If the services your business provides fits into multiple subcategories, you can opt to purchase additional subcategories for your listing for \$50 each. Member recruiters can take advantage of

this upgrade for free for the entire year of 2013. Get twice the coverage online.

Another \$50 upgrade option is the "advanced ranking" enhancement.

This feature greatly enhances the current listing by allowing members to upload more photos, post more special offers and enjoy optimum placement for a whole year.

Optimum placement copies your listing from the alphabetical directory of member listings and posts it as a "Featured Listing" in its own highlighted box at the very top of the directory. This is a great way to spotlight your business on Alaskavist.com.

To make sure you receive your free

upgrade, make sure the new member fills out the line that asks for the referral. The new member you signed up will receive all the great membership benefits, and you'll be helping market your own business as well.

For more information about this program, or about Web listing enhancements, interested members can call Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB membership manager, at 746-5032 or e-mail him at justin@alaskavist.com. Copies of the membership application can be found at <http://www.alaskavist.com/members/membership-information-request-form/>



New image CD available

This summer, the Mat-Su CVB worked with a photographer to produce a disc of images members may use in their collateral without having to pay royalty fees. The disc was mailed to members in late October.

Photographer Carmen Williams shot hundreds of images in the Valley while working for Bell's Alaska Travel Guides this summer. Through an agreement with Bell's and Williams, agreements for usage were negotiated by the Mat-Su CVB for the membership.

"We've had requests to use images, so we explored a few options and this was the most cost-effective way for us to be able to provide images to the members," said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB marketing and communications manager.

If you haven't received your copy of the images, or if you'd like another, please e-mail casey@alaskavist.com.

In addition to the 15 images on the CD, Williams has made her library available to members to purchase additional images at a rate of \$150 per photo, which is a significant discount over many stock agencies. To view the library and purchase images for use in marketing materials, members can visit [www.carmenwilliamsphotography.com/stock.html](http://carmenwilliamsphotography.com/stock.html).

"The images we selected are broad and represent all the areas of the Valley," Ressler said. "Carmen also has lots of shots of individual businesses available, and she's agreed to grant the usage of those to our members at a discounted rate."

CVB reaching 3,500 agents

Mat-Su CVB members will have their business information in the hands of more than 3,000 influential travel agents this winter, thanks to a cooperative marketing program the CVB is participating in at the state level.

The 2013 Mat-Su Visitor Guide, which contains a listing for every member, will be distributed to 3,500 travel agents around the United States and Canada in January as part of the state of Alaska's marketing project. This is the first year the CVB has participated in the mailings.

The Alaska-exclusive mailing includes an introductory letter to travel agents, a copy of the state's vacation planner and brochures of participating businesses and organizations. They are mailed to the top producing travel agencies in high-producing Alaska markets.

"This cooperative marketing program is an important one because it allows us to get our members' information, as well as general visitor information about the Valley, to travel agents at a fraction of the price it would cost to do it on our own," said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB marketing manager. "People use travel agents to book their vacations, and this cooperative program allows us to get information in their hands at a time when they are making decisions."

The state of Alaska travel agent packet is expected to ship to agents around Jan. 16. For more information about the program, contact Ressler at casey@alaskavist.com.

Monthly luncheons provide information, networking

In January and February, don't miss the first two informative Mat-Su CVB membership luncheons of 2013.

"Membership luncheons are a great way to network with your fellow business owners and build contacts, in addition to hearing valuable information from the presenters," said Mat-Su CVB Membership Manager Justin Saunders.

On Jan. 11, the focus will be on the hot trends in business, and Julie Nolen of the Alaska Small Business Development Center will be the presenter.

Nolen is a former Mat-Su CVB staff member, so she'll have the relevant

information you need to get ahead in your business.

The February luncheon is set for Feb. 15, and the focus will be on the increase in international visitors to Alaska. Members will find out which international markets are on the increase, which new markets are emerging on a global scale, and most importantly, what you can do to attract these visitors.

International visitation is important to Alaska businesses because those visitors have a tendency to stay longer and spend more per day, according to the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program,

which interviews visitors while they are in Alaska. This year, Australia became the top international market to Alaska for the first time. Jillian Simpson, international and travel trade director at the Alaska Travel Industry Association will be the presenter.

Luncheons are from noon to 1 p.m. at Evangelo's in Wasilla. They are free and open to the public. For \$15, attendees can purchase a buffet lunch directly from Evangelo's.

For more information about the membership luncheons, interested people can contact Saunders at justin@alaskavist.com.

Get involved by joining a CVB committee

The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors is seeking members to participate on various CVB committees during the upcoming year, to ensure the needs of the membership are met in a representative way.

Committees include the Internet committee, marketing and membership committees. Meetings are scheduled four to five times a year, so the time commitment isn't overwhelming for individual members.

"Members shape the direction the organization takes, and we'd like to have more participation at the committee level," said Bonnie Quill, the Mat-Su CVB executive director. "The input we receive from members in the committees helps us determine what direction to take with our marketing efforts, member benefit packages and more."

If you'd like to participate on any of the committees, please e-mail bonnie@alaskavist.com and indicate your preference. Committee meetings are typically an hour or two on a quarterly basis. Committees forward recommendations to the full board of directors for consideration and are an important part of the planning process.

Quill honored by ATIA

Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau executive director, was honored with the Denali Award during the Alaska Travel Industry Association's annual convention in Anchorage.

The Denali Award honors an individual for outstanding leadership, professional excellence and personal contribution to the Alaska travel industry. It is considered one of the top awards in the travel industry in Alaska.

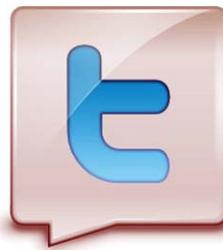
Quill has spent 28 years in the tourism industry, including the last 13 as the Mat-Su CVB executive director. She has worked for MarkAir, Alaska Visitors Association, Princess Tours and was the public relations account manager for the Alaska Tourism Marketing Council while she worked for Bradley/Reid, prior to coming to the Mat-Su CVB. She has also served on the board of directors for ATIA for seven years, helping shape the vision for statewide marketing efforts in that role.

Quill has also served on the board of directors for the Alaska State Fair, was president of the board of directors for the Glenn Highway Scenic Byway Association and has worked on several Mat-Su Borough committees to promote the economic impact tourism has in the Valley.

Stay connected!



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



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



YouTube
"yahoomatsu" channel

Important tourism industry dates to remember

Dec. 25-Jan. 1	Mat-Su CVB offices closed for holidays	
Jan. 5-9	American Bus Association Marketplace <i>Mat-Su CVB will attend and have appointments</i>	Charlotte, N.C.
Jan. 11	Mat-Su CVB January membership luncheon <i>Hot Business Trends in 2013,</i> <i>Presented by Julie Nolen of Alaska Small Business Development Center</i>	Evangelo's, Wasilla, Noon
Jan. 14-15	Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors planning retreat	Mendeltna Creek Lodge
Jan. 20-25	National Tour Association Exchange <i>Mat-Su CVB will attend and have appointments</i>	Orlando, FL
Feb. 7-10	Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar <i>Mat-Su CVB will attend and have booth in tradeshow</i>	Reykjavik, Iceland
Feb. 8-10	Boston Globe Travel Show <i>Mat-Su CVB will be present in state of Alaska booth</i>	Boston
Feb. 15	Mat-Su CVB February membership luncheon <i>Capitalizing on international visitors to Alaska</i> <i>Presented by Jillian Simpson, Alaska Travel Industry Association</i>	Evangelo's, Wasilla, Noon
Feb. 22-24	L.A. Times Travel Show <i>Mat-Su CVB will be present in state of Alaska booth</i>	Los Angeles
March 22-24	Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show <i>Mat-Su CVB will have a booth</i>	Wasilla (Menard Center)
March 28-31	Great Alaska Sportsman Show <i>Mat-Su CVB will have a booth</i>	Anchorage (Sullivan Arena)
April 5	Mat-Su CVB Wine Tasting & Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza	Evangelo's, Wasilla, 6:30 p.m.
April 19-21	Fairbanks Outdoors Show <i>Mat-Su CVB will have a booth</i>	Fairbanks

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that keeps you from being taken by a criminal.

Credit card fraud is also an important issue facing businesses. There are five main types of credit card fraud - counterfeit cards, cards that aren't present, friendly fraud, credit abuse and stolen cards.

When you are in doubt about a situation, always ask card holders for identification. You should always contact the bank if the card holder acts suspiciously or if the card seems unusual. Asking questions, whether to the card holder or to the bank, is an easy way to protect yourself from financial fraud.

In all cases, be aware of what the customer is trying to do. If you think you are the victim of fraud, act immediately and contact your bank or credit card company. Scam artists are often in a race against time, trying to steal as much as they can in a short amount of time until it's detected, so it is important to act quickly.

Nicole Bendle is on the board of directors for the Mat-Su CVB. She works at First National Bank Alaska.

AWARDS: Members honored

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Creek Restaurant, Denali Brewing Company has grown throughout its three-year history, while still being an important member to the Talkeetna community. The organization donates heavily to local organizations, and has garnered statewide awards for its handcrafted ales.

The Gold Star Award is given to business or organization for its overall efforts in the tourism industry. Matanuska Electric Association was this year's honoree, for its effort in partnering with the Mat-Su CVB on a Gateway Visitor Center project.

MEA bought land identified by the Mat-Su CVB for a proposed visitor center, and is now working with the organization to partner in the future development, including a "option to purchase" agreement.

The Mat-Su CVB also honored Craig Seibert, who owned Gate Creek Cabins in the Trapper Creek/Petersville area and served on the Mat-Su CVB board throughout the late 2000s. Seibert was heavily involved in winter tourism, and was instrumental in marketing the upper Susitna Valley area.

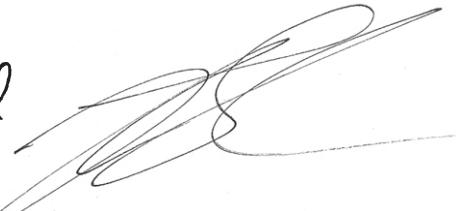
Seibert passed away in June, but his contributions to the tourism industry remain. Seibert's family was present at the November awards banquet to accept the honor.



Mat-Su CVB board president Craig Saunders, left, presents MEA board member Janet Kincaid and MEA employee Suzie Deuser with the Gold Star Award at the Mat-Su CVB annual awards luncheon in November.

Happy Holidays from
the Mat-Su CVB!

Bonnie Quill Neil Campbell



Casey Reske

The Mat-Su CVB office will be closed Dec. 25-Jan. 1.
We'll reopen for regular business hours on Jan. 2.

YAHOO!
Mat-Su

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