

# The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Winter 2014

## Inside this issue

New Mat-Su CVB board president Cheryl Metiva is looking forward to working with new members

Page 2

The 2015 Mat-Su Visitor Guide is now available, and downloadable for the first time ever

Page 5

Co-op marketing opportunities offered to members at three Alaska shows, one national consumer show

Page 6

## Contact us

### Bonnie Quill

Executive Director  
746-5001  
bonnie@alaskavisit.com

### Casey Ressler

Marketing & Communications  
Manager  
746-5037  
casey@alaskavisit.com

### Justin Saunders

Membership Manager  
746-5032  
justin@alaskavisit.com

### Neil Campbell

Administrative Manager  
746-5000  
info@alaskavisit.com

## Local tourism leaders honored



Trisha Costello, left, presents Candice McDonald of Salmon Berry Tours with the Gold Star Award. Salmon Berry was awarded for the work they do in promoting tourism in the Mat-Su Valley, and their zeal for winter tourism.

Arkose Brewery, Salmon Berry Tours, the Mat-Su Borough, Jim Colver and David Johnston were all honored during the Stars of the Industry awards luncheon on Nov. 7 for their contributions to the tourism industry in the Valley.

The Northern Lights Award, given to a community or organization, was given to the Mat-Su Borough for its continued support of the tourism industry as a whole, and for its role in developing tourism infrastructure projects that benefit the industry. Borough Manager John Moosey and Assemblymembers Matthew Beck, Jim Colver and Dan Mayfield were present to accept the award.

The Cheechako Award honors a business that not only survives, but thrives during its early years. Arkose Brewery has done exactly that in the three years it has been open in Palmer, and owners Stephen and June Gerteisen were on hand to accept the award.

Salmon Berry Tours garnered the Gold Star Award for general excellence. Owner Candice McDonald and her team have extensively promoted the Mat-Su Valley as

See AWARDS, Page 4

## Storytelling focus of annual meeting

How do you rise above the noise? That was the question Jurek Lipski of Sparkloft Media asked Mat-Su CVB members during the annual meeting in November, and provided answers on how to better tell their stories.

Lipski was the keynote speaker during this year's annual meeting, which proved to be engaging and informative. He gave real world examples of how small businesses can get their message out in unique ways.

*"Telling your story isn't just about posting something on Facebook every now and then. There is a sea of noise out there, how you stand out above that noise is important."*

- Jurek Lipski,  
Sparkloft Media

"Telling your story isn't just about posting something on Facebook every now and then," Lipski said. "There is a sea of noise out there, how you stand out above that noise is important."

Lipski said an important tactic to "stand out above the noise" includes everyone telling each other's stories. For example, the Mat-Su CVB tells the collective story of the

See STORIES, Page 4

**2014-2015  
Mat-Su CVB  
Board of Directors**

Cheryl Metiva  
Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman  
President  
275-2109  
addirector@frontiersman.com

Zack Steer  
Sheep Mountain Lodge  
745-5121  
Vice President  
info@sheepmountain.com

Mark Austin  
Musk Ox Farm  
Secretary  
745-4151  
mark@muskoxfarm.org

Rick Peterson  
Mt. McKinley Princess  
Wilderness Lodge  
Treasurer  
550-7778  
rpeterson@hollandamerica-  
princess.com

Craig Saunders  
Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours  
Past President  
745-2505  
craig@alaska.global

Travis Taylor  
Premier Alaska Tours  
Executive Committee member  
279-0001  
travis@touralaska.net

Karen Harris  
Alaska Garden Gate Bed & Breakfast  
746-2333  
info@gardengatebnb.com

Roberta Caenepeel  
CIRI Alaska Tourism Corp.  
777-2829  
robertac@ciri.com

Israel Mahay  
Mahay's Jetboat Adventures  
841-1307  
izzymahay@gmail.com

Cole Ouellette  
Rust's Flying Service and K2 Aviation  
243-1595  
cole@flyrustsk2.com

*From the president's desk*

## New board members bring youth, energy and vision for the future

Happy holidays! As we close out 2014, the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors is gearing up for the new year, and we're preparing for our board retreat Jan. 7-8, where we'll discuss policies, programs and more for the upcoming year.

I look forward to my new role as president of the board of directors after serving as the vice president 2005-2010 and 2011-2014. In that time, I've had the privilege of working with exceptional leaders who have helped guide the Mat-Su CVB in a very positive manner. That includes our outgoing president, Craig Saunders, who did a fantastic job.

As I step into the president's role on the board of directors, I look forward to continuing the positive momentum Craig, and the rest of our past presidents, have established. They have all done a great job in leading the organization forward.

One of the things I'm particularly looking forward to is serving as a mentor for the three new board members – Cole Ouellette, Israel Mahay and Roberta Caenepeel.

Last fall, we had a roster of board candidates that was exceptional, to say the least, and these three young professionals won seats on the board in what turned out to be an extremely close election (see related story on Page 3). These three members bring a youthful energy to our board, continuing the trend set in last year's election of Zack Steer of Sheep Mountain Lodge and Travis Taylor of Premier Alaska Tours.

While fresh new voices and youthful energy are important to any board, so is continuity and having a long-term vision, with the ability to stay the course.

We've got board members like Craig and Karen Harris of Alaska Garden Gage

B&B who have served on the board for multiple terms, giving us a great mix of new and experienced board members to help shape the future of our organization. It's a dynamic mix of leaders from within our industry.

I'm looking forward to working with the board and providing a clear vision for the future. This is an exciting time for the tourism industry in the Valley, as we've continued to grow and new projects such as the Gateway Visitor Center and the South Denali Visitor Center are on the horizon. The Mat-Su CVB board has taken an active leadership role in the advocacy and development of these projects, because we feel they are instrumental in adding to the visitors' experience here in the Mat-Su Valley.



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

You can be confident that your Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors is working hard to keep the

Valley positioned as a premier visitor destination – through our marketing programs, member relations and as advocates for the tourism industry both on the local and statewide levels.

As I mentioned, our board retreat and strategic planning session is taking place the first week of January, and we would like to hear from you regarding any thoughts and concerns that you would like the board to consider moving forward. You can e-mail me at addirector@frontiersman.com or call 352-2291.

Thank you for being a valued member of the Mat-Su CVB. We're looking forward to a great 2015!

*Cheryl Metiva (addirector@frontiersman.com) is the new president of the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors, and the Director of Advertising & Marketing at the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman.*

**The Mat-Su CVB office will be closed Dec. 24-Jan. 1 for the holiday season. We'll reopen for business on Jan. 2.  
Have a merry and safe holiday!**

*From the executive director***‘Let’s finish the things that we have started’**

Our legislature this next session will be challenged with developing and passing a FY16 budget with a significant decline in oil revenues. Looking for cost savings, identifying cuts and considering new revenues will all no doubt be debated. But all programs and projects need to be evaluated on their return on investment (ROI).

Tourism is a key driver in our state’s economy and it is a sustainable industry. State and local destination marketing is an investment and a proven revenue generator. Tourism in Alaska is a leading employer and contributes more than \$179 million in state and local taxes and contributed an overall economic impact of \$3.8 billion. Alaska tourism grew to a record high of 1.96 million visitors in 2013, a 7 percent gain over 2012. Cruise traffic, which had a slight downturn in 2014 (-3.3 percent), will rebound for 2015 (+2.8 percent) due to larger ships and more departures. Holland America’s Amsterdam will return to Anchorage next summer with a record nine arrivals bringing thousands of guests and crew ashore each call. Legislators need to be informed and armed with the facts when making tough decisions about budget priorities.

The Mat-Su Borough Assembly has elevated the Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center project to one of its top five priorities in its legislative requests in recognition the facility will promote the assets of the borough and encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more money. It’s about creating more opportunities for visitors to choose and explore in the Mat-Su Valley. Currently in the design phase with a \$1.235 million state capital appropriation, the Gateway Visitor Center project has also funded and completed a Feasibility Study for \$140,000 in 2010 with a federal National Scenic Byways grant, and purchased the 48-acre site at Mile 36 Glenn Hwy. in 2014 with \$1 million state funds.

The final phase and request for \$5 million in construction costs will also be matched with approximately \$2 million from the sale of the current visitor center parcel next to Mat-Su Regional Hospital, located in a valuable medical campus site. The assembly in 2013 passed a resolution dedicating the sale of the current visitor center to finish the Gateway Visitor

Center. At this final phase of the project the borough will be providing the match. The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors sent a Memorandum of Understanding to the borough administration in early November supporting the sale of the current site and directing an appraisal of the property. The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors feels this will further the project in the final phase and demonstrate our commitment to the final phase of funding and completion of the Gateway Visitor Center.

This project is all about economic development and providing awareness of the world-class recreational assets in the borough (repeat again) for visitors to stay longer and spend more money. In the recent past discussions on determining capital appropriations, elected officials have expressed we need to “finish things we have started.”

The Gateway is a prime example of a well-planned, phased and completely supported project.

Let’s get this done.

*Bonnie Quill (bonnie@alaskavisit.com) is the Mat-Su CVB Executive Director.*



**Bonnie Quill**

**Board of Directors welcomes three new members**

Three new board members were seated on the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors at the annual meeting on Nov. 7 at Evangelo’s, following the October election.

Cole Ouellette of K2 Aviation, Roberta Caenepeel of CIRI Alaska Tourism (Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge) and Israel Mahay of Mahay’s Jet Boat Adventures were elected to the board in a tight race.

“The roster of board candidates this year was the very best we’ve ever had, and it was a very close election,” said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. “I’m appreciative of all the candidates who ran.”

The three new board members join Craig Saunders of Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours, Zack Steer of Sheep Mountain Lodge, Cheryl Metiva of the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman, Karen Harris of Alaska Garden Gate B&B and Cottages, Rick Peterson of Mount

McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge, Mark Austin of the Musk Ox Farm and Travis Taylor of Premier Alaska Tours. Leaving the board of directors is Mabel Wimmer, Dee O’Brien and Nicole Bendle. They were presented with gold pans for their service on the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors.

At the Nov. 7 board meeting, new officers were also elected. After two years, Saunders passed the president’s gavel to Metiva (see her president’s report on Page 2). Steer will serve as the vice president, Peterson is the new treasurer and Austin will serve as secretary.

“Craig’s leadership has been invaluable for not only our organization, but for the entire Mat-Su tourism industry as a whole,” Quill said. “He has been instrumental in the Gateway Visitor Center project, and I’m happy that he’s willing to continue those efforts in the future.”



**Clockwise from top left, Roberta Caenepeel (CIRI Alaska Tourism), Cole Ouellette (K2 Aviation) and Israel Mahay (Mahay’s Jet Boat Adventures) all were elected to the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors in early November.**

## Awards: Businesses, individuals honored at annual lunch



Stephen and June Gerteisen accept the Cheechako Award from Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler during the Stars of the Industry awards luncheon. The Gerteisens own Arkose Brewery, which has thrived during its first three years.

Continued from Page 1

part of their statewide itineraries, and they have been an important part in the growth of winter tourism. Talkeetna Roadhouse owner Trisha Costello presented the award.

The Tourism Angel Award was given to Colver, for his support and efforts as a Mat-Su Borough Assemblymember. Cindy Bettine presented the award. Colver was a major advocate for the Government Peak Chalet and Nordic trail system, as well as other tourism infrastructure projects.

The Spirit of Tourism Award isn't given annually, but this year was bestowed to David Johnston for his behind-the-scenes efforts. Johnston, a well-known ultramarathoner, has developed several races in the Willow area that attract out-of-town visitors, and he's always been a champion for the Mat-Su Valley as a whole.

## Stories: Standing out above the noise is important

Continued from Page 1

destination, while individual businesses craft their own stories that all make up important parts of the overall message. Collectively, the stories carry greater weight than if told individually.

At the annual meeting, Justin Saunders of the Mat-Su CVB debuted several short videos he's been working on throughout the summer, which highlight members, destinations and activities. They are all part of telling the Mat-Su's story.

"We've made an effort to make these videos relevant, and accessible by people on the go through YouTube and integrating those into our social media hub," Saunders said. "Video resonates with people and excites them about the destination."

The videos can also be used by members for posting on their site, or for promotion of the Mat-Su Valley. For information regarding the videos available, or to schedule a time when Saunders can meet members on new videos, interested people can e-mail [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

When it comes to posting on social media, Lipski provided some helpful tips, such as taking advantage of Facebook's post scheduling system, as well as a handy checklist to make your content more relevant.

Lipski also said having a content



Jurek Lipski of Sparkloft Media tells the crowd at the Mat-Su CVB annual meeting in November how to "speak above the noise" through social media.

calendar prepared is a great idea because it allows you to form a strategic plan and continuity in your messaging.

Overall, the storytelling seminar was well received by the audience of more than 75 who attended.

"We had great feedback from the members who attended and we're all

excited to tell the Mat-Su Valley's story in new ways," said Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su CVB's executive director. "Jurek's presentation was very entertaining, but it was also very informative and I think our members benefitted from what he had to say."



The 2015 Visitor Guide, above, is also available online for download for the first time, to better assist those who don't want a printed guide but still want the information.



## 2015 Visitor Guide available in print and online

The 2015 Mat-Su Visitor Guide is hot off the presses, and this year, it's hot off the Web for the first time.

The guide was printed in early November, and copies are now available for members. This year, for the first time, the guide will also be available digitally on the Mat-Su CVB's Web site, [www.alaskavisit.com](http://www.alaskavisit.com), the first week of January.

There, site visitors can access the guide in a "page-turning" format, and also download a PDF version of the guide to a computer or tablet.

"There is definitely a place for a printed visitor guide still, but this new project also allows us to get our guide in the hands of people who would rather not receive a physical copy," Mat-Su CVB's Casey Ressler said.

Requests for the Visitor Guide at [www.alaskavisit.com](http://www.alaskavisit.com) is also how the e-mailed leads are generated. Because these leads are important to the members, the virtual visitor guide will reside behind this "data wall" on the Web site.

"It's important that we protected the

leads program with the introduction of the virtual guide, because those leads are important and valuable for our members," Ressler said.

Once again this year, 100,000 copies of the guide were printed.

The Mat-Su CVB distributes 50,000 copies to high-potential visitors identified by the state of Alaska's tourism marketing program in mid-January, and another 4,000 copies are mailed to high-producing travel agents around the country through a state of Alaska marketing program.

## Stay connected to tell our story!



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



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



YouTube  
"yahoomatsu" channel

## Cooperative marketing opportunities available

You can reach a national audience of potential visitors for as low as \$50 by participating in the Mat-Su CVB's 2015 brochure distribution program.

The Mat-Su CVB will be attending three in-state outdoors show in the spring, as well as having its own booth for the first time at the Los Angeles Travel and Adventure Expo, and members can have their brochures distributed at all four by taking advantage of a special offer, which is only available through mid-January.

"Normally, we charge \$25 for each in-state show, but this year, if you sign up for all three in-state shows, we'll take your brochures to the Los Angeles show for free," explained Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB's marketing manager. "There are 20,000 potential visitors at the L.A. show, giving you great reach."

In addition, the Mat-Su CVB is also offering two booth share opportunities at the L.A. show. For \$250, you can be represented in the booth to talk about your tour or property, which must be located in the Mat-Su Borough to qualify. Transportation is not included.

"It's a tremendous opportunity to be represented at one of the busiest travel consumer shows in the country for a very affordable price" Ressler said.

For more information e-mail [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com). To download the registration form, visit [www.alaskavisit.com/includes/media/docs/2015-Coop-flyer.pdf](http://www.alaskavisit.com/includes/media/docs/2015-Coop-flyer.pdf)

### 2015 brochure distribution calendar

#### Los Angeles Travel and Adventure Expo

Feb. 21-22 in Long Beach, CA

\$50 for 200 brochures, \$250 to share Mat-Su booth

#### Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show

March 27-29, Menard Center in Wasilla

\$25 for 100 brochures, giveaways needed

#### Great Alaska Sportsman Show

April 2-5, Sullivan Arena in Anchorage

\$25 for 100 brochures, giveaways needed

#### Fairbanks Outdoors Show

April 17-19, Carlson Center in Fairbanks

\$25 for 100 brochures, giveaways needed

#### SPECIAL OFFER

Have your brochures distributed at all four shows for just \$75. Must register before Jan. 19 to qualify.

## Travel trade targeted at ABA, NTA conventions

The Mat-Su CVB is marketing to tour operators at the National Tour Association Travel Exchange and the American Bus Association Marketplace events in January.

The two conventions are the largest domestic tour operator events in the country, and the Mat-Su CVB expects to have more than 40 appointments with these key buyers.

"NTA and ABA are a great way to reach tour operators who are actively selling Alaska packages or are interested in getting into selling Alaska," Casey Ressler said. "The appointment process ensures that the meetings you have are very targeted, and very productive."

If your business has any new products, tours or new information that would fit with the group tour market, make sure you let the CVB know by e-mailing [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com) so he can include it during his appointments.

"Operators always want to know what's new in the destination, and they are interested in learning about new products and tours," Ressler said. "I distribute a new product sheet, as well as a destination overview, to the operators, so the more information they have the better."

ABA Marketplace is Jan. 10-14 in St. Louis, and NTA's Travel Exchange takes place Jan. 18-21 in New Orleans. Leads from both events will be available for members in early February. If you'd like more information about these two shows, or get the leads in an Excel spreadsheet format, e-mail [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com).

Leads should be available approximately two weeks after the completion of the shows.

## ITB Berlin, Icelandair part of international efforts

For the first time, the Mat-Su CVB is participating in ITB Berlin, one of the largest international travel shows in the world, the first week of March.

The CVB will have a representative in the state of Alaska's booth for appointments with tour operators and agents from around German-speaking Europe, one of the state's largest segments of international visitors.

"This is a great opportunity to participate with the state of Alaska at one of the most important travel trade shows in the world," said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB's marketing manager. "Reaching this market is important, because it represents such a large number of international visitors."

Alaska is well represented at the show, including other destination marketing organizations such as Explore Fairbanks and Visit Anchorage, as well as by other companies such as the Alaska Railroad, All Alaska Tours and more.

The CVB will also participate in the Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar in early February. The show, which is highly subsidized by Icelandair, targets operators and agents from Scandinavia and Europe, focusing on hubs serviced by Icelandair.

"Mid-Atlantic is a great fit for us because you get to meet a lot of tour operators who are taking advantage of Icelandair's flights to Anchorage, for a cost that is a fraction of the normal expense of an international sales mission," Ressler explained. "We've made some great contacts at Mid-Atlantic in the past, and have hosted a lot of the operators on familiarization trips as a result of those appointments."

Icelandair has committed to service to Anchorage from Reykjavik for 2015, and has expressed interest in extending.

## Membership luncheons focus on important topics

There are several opportunities to network with fellow members and learn how to market your business better at upcoming Mat-Su CVB luncheons.

On Jan. 23 at Evangelo's in Wasilla, the topic is an update on the Gateway Visitor Center project. This exciting project is picking up steam, as Palmer's Wolf Architecture won the RFP for the design of the facility last fall, and is organizing local workshops to determine themes and interpretative messages. Come find out the current progress, as well as an updated timeline of what to expect as the project moves into the future.

"The Gateway Visitor Center will have a major impact on tourism in the Mat-Su Valley, and the luncheon is a great way to hear about the current status, as well as provide feedback and stories to the design team," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

On Feb. 20, the luncheon will be held at the Government Peak Chalet in Hatcher

Pass and will feature a workshop presented by the Alaska Travel Industry Association. Tanya Carlson from the Alaska Travel Industry Association will be on hand to talk about how members can develop an effective communications and marketing plan.

"This will be an in-depth workshop that many members will find educational and very useful," Quill said.

The March 20 luncheon will be held at Turkey Red in Palmer and focus on how members can take advantage of leads to grow their business. Membership Manager Justin Saunders will give a brief presentation on how to best respond to these.

He'll highlight best practices and give members tips and tools to help turn those leads into customers.

For information about upcoming membership events, including the luncheons, contact Saunders at [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

### January 23

Gateway Visitor Center update  
Wolf Architecture will present  
*Noon, Evangelo's*

### February 20

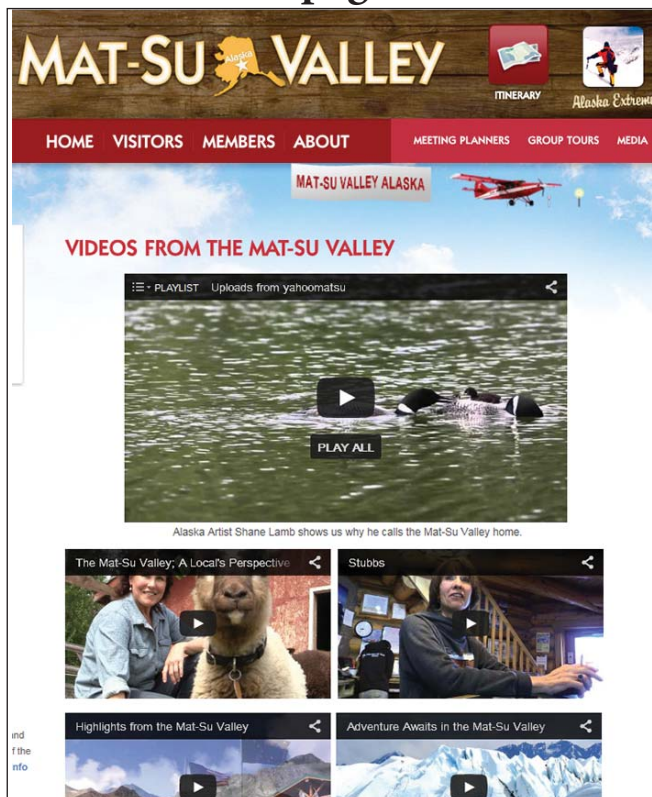
Developing a Communications  
and Marketing Plan  
Tanya Carlson of Alaska Travel  
Industry Association will present  
*Noon, Government Peak Chalet*

### March 20

Leads: Best Practices  
Justin Saunders of the  
Mat-Su CVB will present  
*Noon, Turkey Red*

To RSVP to any member event,  
e-mail [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com)

### New video page launched



The Mat-Su CVB recently launched a new video page at [www.alaskavisit.com/videos](http://www.alaskavisit.com/videos). Here, you'll find the latest videos used to promote the area. The videos are also available at YouTube, under the YahooMatSu channel. Video is a powerful tool to market a destination.

## Save the date for the travel auction ExTRAVELganza

Save the date – the annual Mat-Su CVB Wine Tasting and Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza is set for April 11.

Once again, the event will include a fun evening of entertainment, wine tastings, hors d'oeuvres and plenty of deals on both silent and outcry auction items. Each year, the event sells out and has become a springtime tradition.

Donation requests will be mailed out soon to members. By donating an auction item, you are helping support the fundraising efforts of the Mat-Su CVB, and also helping promote not only your business, but the tourism industry as a whole.

"No item is too big or too small," said Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB's membership manager. "We've had everything from cruises to coffee cards. Without the generous support of the community through donations, this event wouldn't be possible."

The popular luggage tag raffle will be offered once again, with \$20 getting you a luggage tag and a chance to win two round-trip tickets on Alaska Airlines.

Tickets for the auction are \$35 each or a reserved table of eight for \$265. Tickets – both for the event and for the raffle – will go on sale in the early spring.

There are also sponsorship opportunities for the event as well. For as low as \$300, your business can be featured on the event's promotional materials and be highlighted throughout the event on table tents, event signage, a PowerPoint that runs through the evening and also recognized by the emcee periodically. Admission tickets are also included for sponsors, giving your company great value for sponsorship.

For more information, or to sponsor the event, interested people can e-mail [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com). When tickets go on sale, they will be available by calling the Mat-Su CVB office at 746-5000.

## Alaska Media Road Show generates editorial coverage

The Mat-Su CVB attended Alaska Media Road Show in Santa Barbara in late October, where Bonnie Quill and Casey Ressler had more than 25 appointments with leading national travel writers and bloggers.

Alaska Media Road Show is a great way to introduce the Mat-Su Valley to travel writers, and ultimately leads to generating editorial coverage of the area. Attending journalists have a wide range of outlets, from adventure publications to food-related magazines.

“Building relationships with travel writers is very important, and we’ve seen great results through attending Alaska Media Road Show, every October,” Quill said.

More than 45 travel writers attend Road Show, which is organized by Thompson & Co., the state of Alaska tourism office’s

***“By attending Alaska Media Road Show, we continue conversations and pitches with journalists that pays off months and even years down the road.”***

- Casey Ressler  
Mat-Su CVB

public relations firm. Prescheduled appointments take place all day, while receptions and meals are a way to meet with other attendees.

While the Mat-Su CVB participates in statewide familiarization trips for travel writers, they also host two extended Mat-Su specific trips for writers. Based on an appointment at the 2013 Road Show, the Mat-Su CVB hosted Roger Ward of Northwest Travel Magazine in late August. His editorial coverage is scheduled to appear in a summer 2015 edition of the magazine.

“It’s important to establish those relationships because often, it takes more than a year to get something published,” Ressler explained. “By attending Alaska Media Road Show, we continue conversations and pitches with journalists that pays off months and even years down the road.”

Based on the Mat-Su CVB’s attendance at Alaska Media Road Show in the past, editorial coverage in publications such as the New York Times, the New York Post and many others has resulted.

“Research shows that readers ‘trust’ editorial stories more than a simple printed advertisement,” Quill said. “Generating editorial coverage in magazines, blogs, newspapers and on social media is far more valuable than what our advertising budget would allow. It has tremendous reach.”

## Mat-Su CVB marketing winter events

The Mat-Su CVB is assisting four community winter events in the Valley as a way to promote winter tourism focused around community-based celebrations.

Print ads have run in the Alaska Dispatch promoting Talkeetna Winterfest and Colony Christmas in early December, and will continue in January and February promoting Willow Winter Carnival and Big Lake Winterfest.

Radio advertising is also being coordinated around the events, airing on two Anchorage stations.

“These target Southcentral Alaska residents who are looking for something to do. Winter events are a great way to attract these visitors,” Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager Casey Ressler said. “It’s a great way to tie in the marketing efforts of the CVB and the marketing efforts of the organizations hosting these events.”

In-state residents make up a large portion of the winter visitors to the Valley, who often come for snowmachining, skiing and other activities.

The Mat-Su CVB board of directors made the decision to provide marketing assistance at last year’s board retreat and planning session.

“Events drive people here, so it’s a win-win opportunity for the CVB and for the event organizers,” Bonnie Quill said.

### Yearly snapshot of www.alaskavisit.com

<u>Sessions</u>	<u>Page Views/Session</u>
2013: 61,666	2013: 2.30
2014: 82,316	2014: 2.54
Increase of 34%	Increase of 10%
<u>Unique visitors</u>	<u>Bounce rate</u>
2013: 49,672	2013: 61%
2014: 67,507	2014: 54%
Increase of 36%	Decrease of 7%
<u>Page Views</u>	<u>Facebook “Likes”</u>
2013: 142,085	2013: 7,037
2014: 208,831	2014: 10,500
Increase of 47%	Increase of 49%

*All statistics from Jan. 1, 2014 to Dec. 22, 2014*



# Tourism industry calendar of events

Dec. 24-Jan. 1	Mat-Su CVB offices closed for holidays	
Jan. 7-8	Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors Strategic Planning Retreat	Alaska Garden Gate B&B
Jan. 10-14	American Bus Association Marketplace <i>Mat-Su CVB will attend</i>	St. Louis
Jan. 17-21	National Tour Association Travel Exchange <i>Mat-Su CVB will attend</i>	New Orleans
Jan. 17-18	Chicago Travel & Adventure Show <i>Mat-Su CVB participating in the state booth</i>	Chicago
Jan. 23	January membership luncheon – Gateway Visitor Center update	Noon, Evangelo's
Feb. 4-8	Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar <i>Mat-Su CVB will attend</i>	Reykjavik
Feb. 7-8	Boston Globe Travel Show <i>Mat-Su CVB sharing in Visit Anchorage's booth</i>	Boston
Feb. 20	February membership luncheon – Marketing & Communications plan	Noon, Government Peak Chalet
Feb. 21-22	Los Angeles Travel & Adventure Show <i>Mat-Su CVB will have its own booth</i>	Long Beach, CA
March 3-7	ITB Berlin <i>Mat-Su CVB is participating in the state booth</i>	Berlin, Germany
March 20	March membership luncheon – leads	Noon, Turkey Red
March 27-29	Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show <i>Mat-Su CVB has a booth</i>	Menard Center
April 2-5	Great Alaska Sportsman Show <i>Mat-Su CVB has a booth</i>	Sullivan Arena
April 11	Mat-Su CVB Wine Tasting & Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza	Evangelo's
April 17-19	Fairbanks Outdoors Show <i>Mat-Su CVB has a booth</i>	Carlson Center

## News from the membership

**Alaska's Harvest B&B** has had a fantastic run for 13 years now. The B&B is adding two more bathrooms, totaling seven, and now every room will have a private, full bath and most have private balconies with a mountain view. The expansion will be complete by March 1, in time for the busy summer season.

**Alaska Garden Gate B&B and Cottages** is putting the finishing touches on a new 4,000 square foot addition. The new building will contain five guest bedrooms each with a private bathroom, and a separate two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment, for a total of six new units for guests. There will be a total of 18 lodging units. The bedroom-bathroom suites will offer a queen bed and bunk beds to sleep up to five people per room. All other lodging choices offer a full kitchen and living room, so this new category is a fit for guests who are looking for a simpler, less expensive lodging choice. A large portion of the building will also be a new breakfast hall and certified kitchen, where a breakfast buffet will be served daily. The breakfast hall will also double as a meeting space for groups, retreats and small meetings up to 60 people. Alaska Garden Gate B&B and Cottages can be reached at

(907) 746-2333 or see [www.gardengatebnb.com](http://www.gardengatebnb.com).

**Mat-Su College** is pleased to announce the opening of the new 520-seat Glenn Massay Theater, located on the campus of Mat-Su College, in early February. The theater will be able to host a variety of events including plays, musicals, lectures, conferences, concerts, competitions, festivals, benefits, recitals, movie screenings, receptions and more. The goal of the venue is to become an outlet for both the campus and the Mat-Su Valley community to have a new stage to present their ideas and creative endeavors to the public. It will be a venue of education and entertainment that can help to strengthen, engage, provoke dialogue and empower the community.

In summer 2015, **MICA Guides** is debuting "G2," a 2,200-foot zipline that starts from a tower 250 feet above the Matanuska River, with views of the glacier and the surrounding mountains. During testing in summer 2014, riders reached speeds of up to 63 miles per hour on this exhilarating thrill ride. The dual zip allows you to race a friend as well. MICA Guides also packages glacier treks with zipline trips.

## Get involved on a committee

Serving on a committee is a great way to get involved with the Mat-Su CVB and help shape the direction the organization takes in marketing the Mat-Su Valley.

There are currently openings on all three committees – membership, marketing and Internet. Committees typically meet quarterly for an hour or two, so there isn't a major time commitment needed from members.

Committees form recommendations that are forwarded to the board of directors for consideration and action. The membership committee focuses on membership benefits, dues and membership programs. The marketing committee focuses on marketing programs, the visitor guide cover and contents and related topics. The Internet committee focuses on the CVB's Web site, including online marketing strategies and directions.

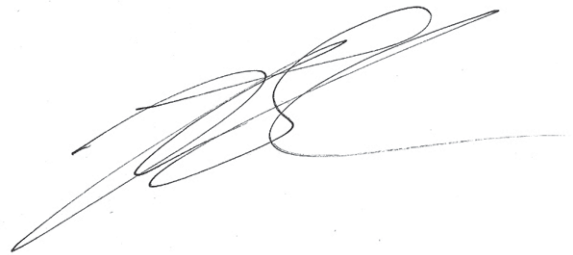
For more information on the committees, interested members can e-mail either [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com) or [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com) for more information, including upcoming meetings.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas  
and a safe and happy New Year!

Bonnie Quill

Neil Campbell

Casey Ressler

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, possibly reading "Neil Campbell", written in a cursive style.

**YAHOO!**  
**Mat-Su**

7744 E. Visitors View Ct.  
Palmer, AK 99645

(907) 746-5000  
[www.alaskavisit.com](http://www.alaskavisit.com)