

The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Winter 2011

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Awards celebrate the 'Stars of the Tourism Industry'

Stars of the industry were honored at the annual Mat-Su CVB awards luncheon Nov. 19 at Settlers Bay Lodge, held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

This year, the Mat-Su CVB celebrated 25 years of marketing the Mat-Su Valley. In the beginning, this year's Tourism Angel award winner – Cindy Bettine – had a hand in creating the organization and serving as a volunteer during the early years. She also has been a big supporter of the Mat-Su CVB during her time as a Mat-Su Borough Assembly member.

"Cindy has always been there for Mat-Su CVB, from Day 1," said Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su CVB's executive director. "I think that it's appropriate that in our silver anniversary, we honored someone who not only helped start the organization, but has consistently supported us for the last quarter century."

The Cheechako Award, given to a business that has not only survived but thrived during its early years, was handed out to Turkey Red, a downtown Palmer restaurant that has quickly become one



Lynne Woods, left, presents Cindy Bettine with the Tourism Angel Award in November. Bettine was instrumental in helping found the Mat-Su CVB 25 years ago.

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South Denali focus of annual meeting

Proposed Visitor Center project a popular topic for audience

Denali State Park took center stage at the Mat-Su CVB's 25th annual meeting on Nov. 19 at Settlers Bay Lodge.

More than 60 members, including Sen. Linda Menard and Rep. Mark Neuman, showed up for the panel discussion about development of the area, and the economic impact it would have on the Valley.

"The development of the South Denali Visitor Center project is important to the tourism industry in the Valley, and

it's obvious by the great turnout that the project is important to our members," said Bonnie Quill, Mat-Su CVB's executive director.

Panelists included Ben Ellis and David Griffin from the state of Alaska, Bruce Bustamante of Princess Tours, Eileen Probasco of the Mat-Su Borough and Miriam Valentine of the National Parks

See DENALI, Page 3

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Mat-Su CVB
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From the president's desk

2012 already - it sure seems like it was just 2009

The holiday season and end of the year is here. Many of us are looking toward 2012 and wondering how 2011 seemed to pass by so quickly.

I was just reviewing the December 2009 newsletter and looking back, what strides we have made since then. At that time we were wondering about stable state funding (and we still are), we were wondering what type of taxes would be imposed on the cruise ship industry and looking at declining cruise ship numbers.

In 2011 we started to see positive growth in those numbers and with more ships coming in 2012 we expect those numbers to grow even more. As a small business you may be asking – how does that affect me? Well, if more people come and tell others to come, the business grows for each and every one of us. Don't forget that statistics show that 30 percent of those who cruise to Alaska come back and do an additional trip and many times it is land only.



**Dee Dee Kay,
CIRI Alaska Tourism
Corp.**

The job of "your" Mat-Su CVB is to make sure people go back talking about the wonders and beauty of our area. The job of our MSCVB is to take every dollar that is invested into the organization and make it pay off at the highest rate of return.

As a CVB we strive to poise ourselves to take advantage of every opportunity to showcase the Valley. This year we did this in the "usual" ways attending consumer trade shows, talking one on one with land tour operators, exploring the established and emerging overseas markets and by helping host those brought to our state on familiarization tours. Our budget does not allow us to pay for airfare to let others see our state but it does allow us to make sure that they see the Mat-Su Valley while they are here.

Our own Craig Saunders was featured on the Travel Channel and with so many

See KAY, Page 9

Executive Director's report

Visitor Center project gains steam

I have more good news to share on the progress of the Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center. Last week the Mat-Su CVB submitted a National Scenic Byways grant application requesting \$800,000 for the design phase of the project. The Federal Highway Administration plans to award more than \$20 million in projects by this spring.

We also heard from Matanuska Electric Association General Manager Joe Griffith that the co-op was in the process of purchasing the 50-acre Homestead RV property for right of way for the new Eklutna power plant. The bluff RV site has been selected as the preferred visitor center location. MEA forwarded a Memorandum

of Understanding (MOU) to Mat-Su CVB affirming their support in working with the Mat-Su CVB in the future development of the site as the Gateway Visitor Center.

And finally, the Mat-Su Borough Assembly included \$2.5 million for the Gateway Visitor Center in its 2012 legislative priorities. These three actions demonstrate the growing support for the facility. The Mat-Su CVB will be actively seeking partnerships and funding opportunities in the coming year. You can encourage this project by voicing your support to our assembly members and legislators.



**Bonnie Quill,
Mat-Su CVB
Executive Director**

Bonnie Quill is the executive director of the Mat-Su CVB.

Board of directors welcomes new members, officers elected

Members of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau elected two new members to the board of directors, and re-elected two current board members to three-year terms, it was announced at the Voice of the Membership meeting on Nov. 19 at Settlers Bay Lodge.

The newest board member is Mabel Wimmer, who owns Mendeltna Creek Lodge on the Glenn Highway, near Lake Louise. She is a longtime Mat-Su CVB member. Cheryl Metiva of Morris Communications was also elected to the board. She had served on the CVB board of directors in the past.

"It's great to have representation on the board by someone who is located in one of the more remote areas of our Valley," said Bonnie Quill, executive director of the Mat-Su CVB. "It brings a new perspective to the board.

"Cheryl brings familiarity and leadership to the board as well," Quill said.

Two former board members returned – Dee Dee Kay of CIRI Alaska Tourism Corp. and Nicole Bendle of First National

Bank Alaska. Kay was elected to serve as the organization's president for the third year in a row.

"Dee Dee has provided a tremendous amount of leadership as president, and we're happy to see her continue in that position," Quill said.

Dan McDonough of Lifetime Adventures decided not to run for reelection after serving nine years on the Mat-Su CVB board.

"Dan has done so much for the Mat-Su CVB and we're sad to see him go," Kay said. "He has been a strong advocate and we appreciate all of his contributions through the last decade."

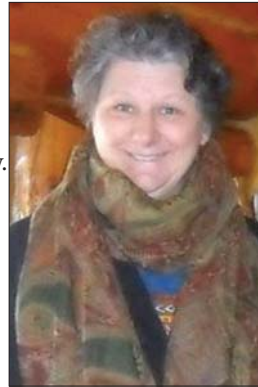
Also departing from the board is Jason

Votruba of Deshka Landing Outdoor Association. He took a job in Colorado and isn't able to serve the remaining term.

"Jason was a very integral part of the board and the Internet committee," Quill said.

The officers for the 2011-2012 year are:

Kay, president; Metiva, vice president; Steve Zadra (Princess Tours), secretary; Bendle, treasurer; and Craig Saunders (Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours), executive committee members. Other members include Karen Harris (Alaska Garden Gate B&B), Mark Austin (Musk Ox Farm), Bethany Buckingham (Dorothy Page Museum), Ruth Rosewarne Kimerer (Alaska Railroad) and Wimmer.



Mabel Wimmer,
Mendeltna Creek Lodge



Cheryl Metiva,
Morris Communications

AWARDS

Continued from Page 1

of the top spots to hit in Palmer. Owner Alex Papasavas was on hand to accept the award.

The Northern Lights Award recognizes an organization or community for excellence in tourism development and promotion.

The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council was honored for its work in ecotourism along the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway.

The prestigious Gold Star Award recognizes a business or organization that has made a significant contribution or accomplishment in the tourism industry. The Mat-Su Health Foundation was this year's winner, in part because of the organization's many contributions to trail improvements.

This year the Mat-Su CVB also presented a special community service award to the Matanuska Greenbelt Trails Project. Volunteers have worked tirelessly to enhance the trail system, which starts at Matanuska Lakes Park.

Special directional signage, trail improvements and informational displays are part of the improvements the organization performed in the area.



Norm Harris of the Matanuska Greenbelt Trails organization accepts the special Community Service Award on behalf of the organization.

DENALI

Continued from Page 1

Service.

All panelists gave a brief 10-15 minute presentation, and then the group took questions from the audience. Questions ranged from transportation concerns to concessionaire opportunities at the new facility.

Following the panel discussion, the business portion of the annual meeting was held. No resolutions were submitted for the membership to vote on, but it was suggested to the board that the Mat-Su CVB explore the possibility of becoming a "green" destination through certification from Adventure Green Alaska.

New board members were introduced (see related story, above), and Quill gave a brief outline of the marketing programs the CVB will undertake in 2011-2012 during the meeting, including in-state marketing, targeting domestic visitors from the Lower 48, and the international markets. Quill also spoke about the developments on the CVB's Web site, including new mobile enhancements.

For more information about the Denali State Park project, interested people can visit www.southdenali.alaska.gov.

2012 Visitor Guide published and available now

The 2012 Mat-Su CVB Visitor Guide recently published, featuring a magnificent shot of Denali on the cover.

This year's guide is full of information for visitors to plan their trips. New features this year include a redesign of the area maps, as well as icons for member listings indicating they have social media sites.

"As much as technology is changing the way people plan their vacations, the printed visitor guide is still an important marketing element," said Bonnie Quill, executive director of the Mat-Su CVB. "People are using the Internet to research their visit, but a printed copy is still in demand."

The CVB published 100,000 copies of the 2012 guide. Half of those will be mailed in January to highly qualified leads identified by the Alaska Travel Industry Association. The rest are distributed to those who inquire directly to the CVB office and at high-profile visitor centers and hotels around Alaska. The guides are also distributed at consumer shows throughout the country, as well as sportsman shows in Alaska.

"As much as technology is changing the way people plan their vacations, the printed visitor guide is still an important marketing element."

- Bonnie Quill,
Mat-Su CVB Executive Director

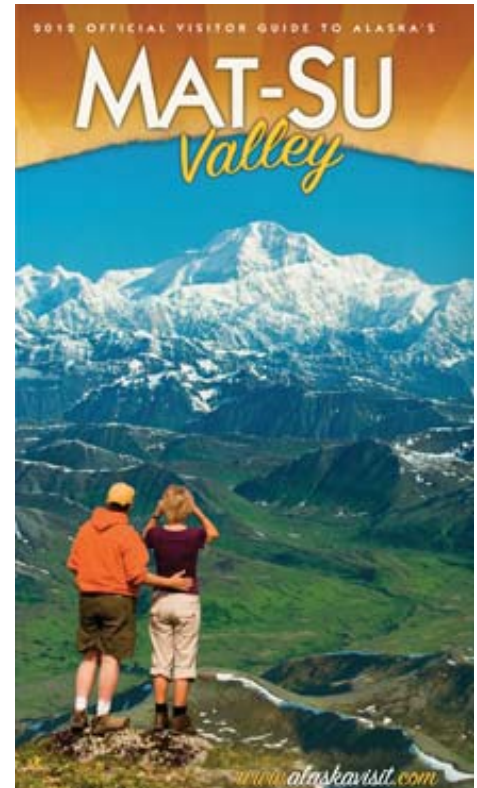
New photos appear throughout the guide, the result of a successful photo shoot in July with photographer Tom Bol.

"We're happy with the way the guide looks – it showcases the Mat-Su Valley in a great way," Quill said.

On the back of the guide, designer Chris Whittington-Evans included a QR code (quick response) that people can scan with their smartphone, which directs them to the 8-minute Mat-Su CVB video, to get them excited about their planned trip to Alaska.

Members who would like copies of the new guide can call 746-5000 or e-mail info@alaskavisit.com.

Copies are available now, and cases are available for those looking to mail the guide to customers.



Mat-Su CVB distributing guides through co-op program

Visitor Guide co-op plan

Los Angeles Travel Adventure Show

Long Beach, Calif.

Jan. 13-16

500 guides distributed, Mat-Su CVB staff represented in ATIA booth

Quartzsite RV Show

Quartzsite, AZ

Jan. 21-29

250 guides distributed

New York Times Travel Show

New York, NY

March 2-4

250 guides distributed

Northwest Sportshow

Minneapolis, MN

March 28-April 1

350 copies distributed

Note: 250 copies were previously distributed during the Dallas Morning News Travel & Adventure Show in mid-November.

This winter, the Mat-Su CVB is partnering with the Alaska Travel Industry Association to market the Valley at key consumer shows around the country.

Casey Ressler from the Mat-Su CVB will be in the Alaska booth at the Los Angeles Travel Adventure Show in Long Beach, Calif., in early January, distributing the 2012 Mat-Su Visitor Guide to travelers in this important market.

"The Southern California market is an important one for Alaska, and by sharing the booth at this show, we have the opportunity to reach this market first hand, and pass along our members' information," Ressler said. "Last year was the first year we were in the ATIA booth at this show, and the feedback from consumers was fantastic."

In addition to the booth share at the Los Angeles travel show, the Mat-Su CVB will send more than 1,100 visitor guides with ATIA representatives to three other national shows, all targeting different demographics that are important to our market.

The largest RV show in the country, Quartzsite, is in late January in Arizona, and spans more than a week. The largest

"By doing brochure distribution through ATIA, it allows us to showcase our members to a national audience in a very cost-effective manner. Through the program, we'll distribute more than 1,500 guides to people around the country who are actively making their vacation plans."

- Casey Ressler,
Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager

consumer travel show on the East Coast is the New York Times Travel Show, is set for March 2-4. The Northwest Sportshow targets outdoor lovers in the Midwest. It is scheduled for March 28-April 1 in Minneapolis.

"By doing brochure distribution through ATIA, it allows us to showcase our members to a national audience in a very cost-effective manner," Ressler said. "Through the program, we'll distribute more than 1,500 guides to people around the country who are actively making their vacation plans."

The ATIA brochure distribution plan is open to any individual business that is a member of ATIA.

Mobile site enhancements target visitors with ‘feet on the ground’

New site will better showcase members

The Mat-Su CVB is developing an intensive mobile-enhanced Web site to reach visitors once they are in Alaska and using their smartphone as they travel.

Currently, the CVB’s mobile site contains member listings in a very basic format. Upon completion of the new site in the spring, the listings will contain photos, links to Web sites, special offers, a calendar of events and a video and photo tour, in a browser design that appears to be an app.

“More and more travelers are utilizing their smartphone as a research tool to make decisions on the go,” said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB’s marketing and communications manager. “The new enhanced site gives members the opportunity to reach these visitors during the decision-making process.”

Smartphone users simply type in the regular Web address, www.alaskavisit.com, into their browser. Redirects are established to send them to the mobile-enhanced version, which is www.alaskavisit.mobi.

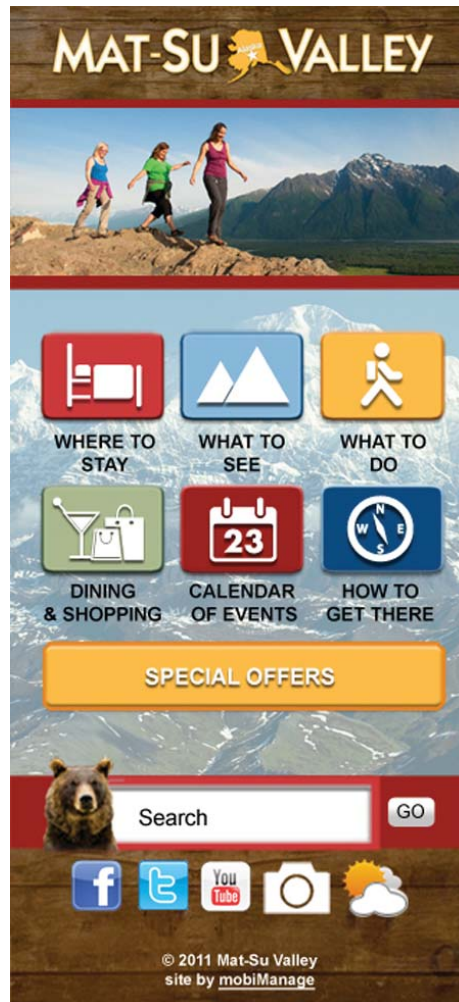
Users accessing the site via an iPad or similar tablet are taken to the regular Web site, however, because of the larger viewable screen. The functionality that comes along with the mobile enhanced site includes the ability to dictate which devices are redirected to the new site, and which ones see the regular www.alaskavisit.com site.

“Research shows that visitors are not only doing research on their mobile devices while already in a destination, but they are purchasing through those devices as well,” Ressler said. “It’s important that we have a strong mobile presence for our members.”

The project should take between 45-60 days and be launched prior to the spring season.

The Mat-Su CVB included a QR (quick response) code on the printed 2012 Visitor Guide that users can scan with their smartphones. Once they scan it, their mobile browser automatically directs them to the new mobile site for the CVB.

“This is a great opportunity to reach people through the printed piece when they are starting to make their decisions,



The prototype design of the new mobile Web site includes links directing visitors to member listings, the calendar of events and even a photo tour of the Valley. The project is currently under way and should be completed by mid-February to early March.

and then once again while they are here through the mobile site, when they are deciding on more immediate plans,” Ressler said.

The new mobile site will also include links to Mat-Su CVB’s social media sites on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.

“We are trying to engage our visitors and keep them connected to our members through a number of tools,” Ressler said. “The new mobile site will be another way for us to not only reach them, but to get them engaged and talking about the Mat-Su Valley, even after their trips are over.”

For more information about the mobile project, interested people can contact Ressler at 746-5037 or via e-mail at casey@alaskavisit.com.

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Mat-Su CVB meets with travel writers at Roadshow

In October, the Mat-Su CVB attended Alaska Media Roadshow, where the organization met with 24 national travel writers and pitched stories about the Mat-Su Valley.

Each fall, Thompson and Company – the public relations firm on contract from the state of Alaska – organizes the event in California, and top writers and producers attend. Each Alaska representative has 15-minute appointments with the journalists.

“Roadshow has been very successful for us in the past, as it leads to national coverage of the Valley that we wouldn’t begin to be able to purchase,” said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB’s marketing and communications manager. “In the last year, we’ve been featured on msnbc.com, on The Today Show and more, and that initial contact has been at Roadshow.”

Journalists are always looking for new story angles in Alaska, and Roadshow allows the CVBs to “pitch” stories with various angles. Some of the stories pitched by Mat-Su CVB included new tour offerings in the area, Iditarod’s upcoming 40th anniversary and the agricultural roots of the Matanuska Valley.

“Each journalist is different, and writes for a different audience. I like to know ahead of time what types of stories the journalists often work on, so I can give



Casey Ressler and Bonnie Quill meet with Andrew McCarthy, the Society of American Travel Writers’ travel writer of the year award recipient in 2010. McCarthy is also a well-known actor and movie director.

them an appropriate pitch,” Ressler said.

The CVB often works with writers and other travel journalists throughout the year, so that’s why it’s important to let the CVB staff know about new products, interesting aspects of your business and other pertinent information.

“Travel writers are always working on deadline. The more information we can give them when they ask, the better their story will be,” Ressler said.

For information on working with travel writers, interested people can call Ressler at 746-5037.

Group tour market targeted at NTA, ABA conventions

The Mat-Su CVB recently attended the National Tour Association convention in Las Vegas, targeting the group tour market. At the convention, Casey Ressler met with tour operators from around the country during prescheduled appointments.

The convention is an important one for the CVB to attend, because major tour operators are there looking for new products to add to their current Alaska packages, or for information on starting an Alaska tour offering.

“The appointments were very, very good this year,” Ressler said.

“There is a lot of interest among tour operators to come to Alaska, and the operators who already come have indicated their clients are asking about Alaska more than in the last few years. That’s great news for Alaska, and for the Valley.”

In January, Ressler will attend the American Bus Association Marketplace event in Dallas. The ABA convention is similar to the NTA convention in that it targets group tour operators, but at ABA, the operators are more focused on motorcoach tours.

“The appointments were very, very good this year. There is a lot of interest among tour operators to come to Alaska.”

*- Casey Ressler,
Mat-Su CVB*

“There is some crossover between the two conventions, but they are very different in the focus of the operators,” Ressler said.

At both conventions, destination marketing organizations request appointments from operators, and are scheduled through a computer program.



Spring outdoor show co-op opportunities for members

The Mat-Su CVB will have a booth at three Alaska outdoor shows this spring, and members have the opportunity to have their brochures distributed for as little as \$25.

Member brochure distribution is available for the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show (March 23-25), the Great Alaska Sportsman Show (March 29-April 1) and the Fairbanks Outdoors Show (April 20-22).

These three shows are geared toward Alaska residents looking for information on things to do in the summer.

"These shows are great opportunities for members to get their information in the hands of Alaskans at a time when they are anxious to get their summer recreation plans started," said Casey Ressler of the

Mat-Su CVB. "And it's a very low-cost way of doing it."

The cost is just \$25 per show, and members can pick and choose which shows they want their rack cards at. More information about the co-op program will follow in the spring.

Show giveaways are also needed for all three shows.

In the past, fishing trips, flightseeing packages and overnight stays have been given out at the Mat-Su CVB booth. If a business wants to donate a show giveaway, the CVB will take their brochures to all three shows for free.

For more information about the co-op program, interested members can contact Justin Saunders at Justin@alaskavisit.com or 746-5032.

Spring outdoor shows

Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show

March 23-25

Menard Center (Wasilla)

Great Alaska Sportsman Show

March 29-April 1

Sullivan Arena (Anchorage)

Fairbanks Outdoors Show

April 20-22

Carlson Center (Fairbanks)

Member brochure distribution is available for \$25 per show. Call 746-5000 for more information.

Wine tasting and travel auction "ExTRAVELganza" set for April 13

The annual Mat-Su CVB Wine Tasting and Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza is slated for Friday, April 13 at Evangelo's in Wasilla.

Each year, the event is a fun-filled event that serves as the biggest fund-raiser of the year for the CVB. In addition to the wine tasting, a jazz band provides entertainment, and the silent and live auctions give attendees the opportunity to enjoy great discounts on adventures and local goods.

Tickets for the wine tasting/travel auction are \$35 each and reserved tables of eight are \$265. They will be available after Jan. 3 by calling 746-5032.

Donation forms are also being mailed on Jan. 3. In the past, donations have ranged from things as small as \$5 coffee cards to 7-day cruises. Any and all donations are appreciated, and help the Mat-Su CVB in a number of ways.

"It's a fun evening that helps us raise money for our marketing programs."

- Justin Saunders,

Mat-Su CVB membership manager

"We get a lot of gift certificates for travel adventures throughout Alaska, but we also have a lot of items from local retailers," said Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB's membership manager. "It's a fun evening that helps us raise money for our marketing programs."

For information about the event, or to donate, interested members can contact Saunders at Justin@alaskavisit.com or 746-5032.

Sponsorship opportunities also exist for members wanting to increase their exposure during the event. For as little as \$300, sponsors receive two complimentary tickets to the event, signage during the evening featuring your logo, and mentions on all event advertising.

Member luncheons resume in January

Mark your calendars for upcoming Mat-Su CVB membership luncheons, where members not only hear from informative speakers, but also get valuable networking opportunities with fellow business owners.

The first luncheon of 2012 is on Friday, January 13 at noon at Turkey Red in downtown Palmer. The topic is how Mat-Su CVB members can benefit from Anchorage convention business, with a presentation by the Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau.

With the new Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center, Anchorage is becoming a convention destination – find out how you can tap into this market. Opportunities abound for Mat-Su CVB members to capitalize on this segment of visitors.

On Feb. 10, the luncheon will be held at the Glacier Canyon Grill in Grand View Inn & Suites in Wasilla. The topic has not been decided, but will be announced in an upcoming e-bulletin.

There is no cost for the program. Lunch is available for purchase directly from the hosting property. Lunch is \$15 at Evangelo's.

Luncheons are a great way to interact with fellow members, and to make announcements about your business. For more information on networking opportunities, interested members can contact Justin Saunders at 746-5032.

The Mat-Su CVB office will be closed Friday, Dec. 23 through Monday, Jan. 2 for the holiday season. We will reopen for regular hours on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

Happy holidays!

Member announcements

Off-season remodeling means that now **Alaska Garden Gate B&B and Cottages** offer all cottages and guest apartments. Our last B&B bedrooms have been transformed into another one-bedroom guest apartment. Now all 12 choices offer private entrances, full kitchens and living rooms, in addition to great views, fireplaces and several which have Jacuzzis. We now also provide generous continental breakfast baskets in each guest's kitchen so they can enjoy it whenever they like. No more waiting for breakfast times or wondering what the breakfast foods will be. Along with B&B upgrades, our website (www.gardengatebnb.com) is recently redone with professional photography and social media connections. Like us on Facebook and receive a free night with any reservation in December or January.

Mr. Kab Shuttle has specials monthly, especially for those of you traveling to Anchorage or the airport for your holiday travels. Visit www.mrkab.biz. We offer round trips to the city with wait time allowed for your reservations to business or medical appointments, or just plain shopping. A full load round trip is \$100. For your safety in our icy and snowy conditions we travel in a 4x4 new Dodge

crew cab with lots of comfort and heat and plenty of room for those large packages in the back of vehicle. Call Sheila at (907) 301-7070.

Sheep Mountain Lodge recently hosted the Sheep Mountain 150 dog sled race, a tune-up for the Iditarod. Past Iditarod champion Jeff King edged Aliy Zirkle to take top honors in this up-and-coming race hosted by Zack and Anjanette Steer. For more information about the race, and the lodge, visit www.sheepmountain.com. Cabins are available throughout the winter months.

Rose Ridge Vacation Chalets has added a second vacation home, the Cottage, to their business. Located at Rose Ridge, 7242 N. Palmer Fishhook Rd, the building was completed in late September 2011 and immediately opened for guests to enjoy. The 1,000 square foot Cottage has a full, modern kitchen, 2 bedrooms (sleeps 4), 1 bath, washer and dryer, all leather furniture, flat screen TV, Wi-Fi and the same incredible southern view as the Chalet. Landscaping will add a patio and barbecue in spring 2012. For more information, visit www.alaskavacationchalet.com.

Riversong Lodge was recently featured in Catch Magazine. You can read the article by clicking <http://www.catchmagazine.net/blast-nov11.html>. Brian O'Keefe, a famous fishing photographer and co-owner of Catch Magazine, visited the lodge this season. He was able to capture amazing photography while visiting Riversong Lodge. Anywhere from salmon fishing, rainbow trout fishing, fishing guide, lodge grounds, lodge interior, our chef's gourmet cuisine and wildlife, he embraced it all.

Morris Alaska/Morris Communications has acquired the WHERE Alaska visitor publication, which is a premier visitor guide that is distributed through hotels and visitor centers statewide.

The **Palmer Musk Ox Farm** was recently featured in a video by journalist Masada Siegel. She previously wrote for the Canadian Jewish News about her travels to Matanuska Glacier, Matanuska Lodge and Denali National Park. To view the raw video (which is being shopped to Reuters), visit <http://voices.yahoo.com/video/looking-stay-warm-alaska-has-answers-10606469.html?cat=3>.

Welcome new members

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Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
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www.chickaloon.org

School partnerships available

Would you like to know more about what our young adults are learning in our schools? Did you know that we have a Business, Health, Fitness, Building/Engineering, and Hospitality/Tourism pathway for students at the Mat-Su Career and Technical High School?

Does your business have an opportunity for a 17- or 18-year-old student with one semester of Customer Service training and various career and technical classes to learn more about their area of study? Would you be willing to present to students about your career and what it is that makes it such a great industry? If you have said yes to any of these questions, then please get in touch with me.

My name is Pepper Thiede, and I am a teacher and work co-op coordinator at the Mat-Su Career and Technical High School. It is my goal to increase the partnerships between our local businesses and our school. What are some ways that you can get involved?

- Guest speaker in a classroom
- Be a presenter at our annual Career Development Day (February)
- Job Shadow opportunity
- Host an intern
- Community Based Learning—Provide opportunities for students to receive hands-on experience within your business
- Future employment opportunities for students throughout the business community

If these are of interest to you, please contact me at 352-0416 or pepper.thiede@matsuk12.us. Your time and efforts toward solidifying the connection between school and industry for young people is greatly appreciated. I look forward to working with you to build a strong foundation for students in our community.

Tourism calendar of events

Jan. 6-10	American Bus Association Marketplace Casey Ressler will attend	Grapevine, Texas
Jan. 13	Mat-Su CVB January luncheon	Noon, Turkey Red (Palmer)
Jan. 14-15	Los Angeles Travel Expo Casey Ressler will represent Mat-Su CVB in ATIA booth	Long Beach, Calif.
Feb. 2-5	Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar Casey Ressler will represent Mat-Su CVB	Iceland
Feb. 10	Mat-Su CVB February luncheon	Glacier Canyon Grill, noon
March 23-25	Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Menard Sports Complex Wasilla
March 28-April 1	Great Alaska Sportsmans Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Sullivan Arena Anchorage
April 13	Mat-Su CVB Wine Tasting ExTRAVELganza	Evangelo's (Wasilla)
April 18-19	Highway Neighbors Conference Mat-Su CVB will have a representative	Tok
April 20-22	Fairbanks Outdoors Show Mat-Su CVB will have a booth	Carlson Center Fairbanks

KAY: Great signs that 2012 will be a solid year for tourism

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reality shows and movies filming in Alaska I guarantee there is a "buzz" about the entire state.

This year, we as a board also challenged Bonnie and her team to bring travel writers to Alaska just to focus on articles about the Mat-Su Valley. We will be seeing articles from those writers very soon. You can't pay for that kind of advertising - the ROI from these type of articles is huge.

Our Web site is up and running and I don't know about you, but every time I get a lead from the Web that allows me to contact the client directly, I appreciate the time and effort that it took to move our vision of the site in the right direction. If you aren't getting leads forwarded to you, give Justin Saunders, our membership manager, a call at 746-5032 and he can walk you through the process so you can start taking advantage of this great member benefit.

Bed tax revenues were up for 2011 and that is a sign that more and more visitors are not only driving through the Mat-Su Valley, but spending the night as well. This is an encouraging sign, and we are counting on this trend to continue in the

coming year.

We as a board are constantly looking for research that will help us identify our target visitor. This year at our planning retreat we will have a presentation concerning research that was recently done by Alaska Travel Industry Association in partnership with the State of Alaska.

The retreat is scheduled for the third week of January in Talkeetna and your input and suggestions are needed. You have elected a great board of directors - use them! Call them up or e-mail them and suggest ideas that you would like us to discuss during this important planning retreat.

As you are putting together your own plans for 2012, I would like to recommend adding a few goals to help ensure your success:

1. Call your Assembly members and legislators to "check in" once a month so that they understand the importance of your industry to the State of Alaska.
2. E-mail the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors after each newsletter (or even more often) with your views

on what we are doing.

3. Visit your listing on the Mat-Su CVB Web site often and post new photos, add new special offerings, keep that listing "alive."
4. Visit Facebook and YouTube and post photos and videos there as well. The more talk about what is happening in the Valley the better for all of us.
5. Join a committee and get involved in shaping the vision of our Mat-Su CVB.

We are here to serve you, the membership. I invite you to contact me any time to discuss any matters you may have. We want to do everything we can to make sure that your marketing needs are being met.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve on your board.

Dee Dee Kay is the president of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors for the 2011-2012 year. She works at CIRI Alaska Tourism Corp.



**Happy holidays from
the Mat-Su CVB staff**

Bonnie Quill



Casey Ressler

Neil Campbell



Mat-Su!
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