

# The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Fall 2013

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## NATIONAL BLOGGER VISITS MAT-SU



Pam Mandel, blogger at [nerdseyeview.com](http://nerdseyeview.com) and a travel writer with numerous publications, takes a moment to revel in the beauty of Matanuska Glacier in August. The Mat-Su CVB hosted Mandel for four days. To find out more about how the Mat-Su CVB works with travel writers, please see Page 7.

## Annual meeting to focus on Gateway Visitor Center project

The Mat-Su CVB's annual meeting includes a focus on the new Gateway Visitor Center project and features a presentation from Park City CVB, who has seen first-hand the positive economic impact a new center has created for their destination.

The annual meeting is Nov. 8 at Evangelo's in Wasilla, and Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill said members should plan on attending and finding out more about the visitor center project and the opportunities it will have on the tourism industry in the Valley.

"This is a project years in the making, and we are generating a lot of positive

energy moving forward," Quill said. "The annual meeting will show our members how important this project is, both in dollars and cents for their businesses and as a vibrant addition to our tourism infrastructure."

Bill Malone of the Park City Convention & Visitors Bureau will be on hand to discuss a similar project in his community. The construction of a new visitors center there boosted traffic to local businesses, visitors stayed longer and spent more money while in the destination. He's excited to share his story with the Valley.

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*The Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors is voted on by the general membership every October. There is currently one opening on the board of directors, and it will be filled during the October election.*

*From the president's desk*

## A united membership helps drive the organization

As a member of the board of directors, I'm proud of the work the Mat-Su CVB has accomplished in the last few years, but I'm even more excited about what the near future holds, both for the organization and more importantly, for us as business owners.

There are many big and exciting things happening in our industry, right here in our backyard. The state just broke ground on a South Denali Visitor Center, which will help extend stays in the Mat-Su Borough. The Mat-Su CVB has taken the lead on a Gateway Visitor Center project and secured funding from the Legislature, another step in a major project. Our marketing message has never been stronger, and that has translated into a third consecutive year of increased bed tax collections. Things are moving forward in a very positive direction, and we can all be happy about that.

But the organization can't do it alone. The strength of a CVB lies in the partnerships it forms with you, its members. These partnerships help fill beds for lodging properties, fill seats for our activity partners, fill museums, shops and restaurants. Mat-Su CVB membership is one of the most affordable marketing tools you can have – and once you have that tool, make sure you use it.

It doesn't matter if you are a large hotel chain or a small, one-person bed and breakfast – you can be a part of this dynamic growth. We all play important roles in the success of our industry.

In the last few years, the Mat-Su CVB has invested tens of thousands of dollars into its Web site, to make sure it works for members and that we connect you to travelers looking for information. We've increased our marketing campaign to target the in-state market, and we've increased our investment in international marketing, all while continuing our current efforts. We've made those investments because it's what we've heard

you want from your membership dollars, and because we've seen positive results from these efforts.

This summer, the Mat-Su CVB staff worked with members, local Mat-Su Borough officials and state legislators to make sure the gate at Independence Mine would remain open seven days a week throughout the summer months. It took a lot of teamwork to make it happen, but ultimately, the gate stayed open for the betterment of our visitors.

That's but one example of how the organization often works, sometimes behind the scenes, to ensure a healthy tourism industry. That in turn benefits us all, big and small businesses alike

With all these tourism infrastructure projects, increased destination marketing and positive energy on our side, there has never been a better time to be a Mat-Su CVB member. It's time for us, as a membership, to rally together and keep the ball rolling on these projects. We've got a lot of great energy moving forward, and together, we can accomplish even bigger things.

I'd like to see all of our members turn out at the annual membership meeting on Nov. 8 at Evangelo's. You'll get an update on our marketing efforts and hear from the board of directors during the Voice of the Membership meeting, and also hear from experts who have been part of visitor center projects around the country. They have seen firsthand the positive impact a project like the Gateway Visitor Center plays in a community.

Come voice your support and be a part of the exciting momentum we've developed – and the great opportunities the future holds for our industry.

*Craig Saunders (alaskavisit@alaska.com) is the president of the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors. He owns Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours.*



Craig Saunders

## Member success story

# Denali Zip Line Tours enjoy success in second year

*Note: Each newsletter, the Mat-Su CVB recognizes a "member success story." This month, we focus on Denali Zipline Tours in Talkeetna.*

High-octane adventure and a remarkable summer of sun have meant big things to Denali Zip Line Tours in Talkeetna, as the second-year company has grown to become a major part of the upper Susitna Valley's tour offerings.

Denali Zip Line Tours opened in July of 2012 and immediately was a success. But in 2013, the company founded by Mark Wildermuth and his wife, Laura, soared to even greater heights, as they expanded from six daily tours to nine to meet the increased demand.

The tour features nine zip lines, which criss-cross the boreal forest in Talkeetna. The first two zips are shorter lines that get people acclimated to the process of zip lining.

From there, the lines get longer and more exhilarating, culminating with a 700-foot zip across a pond onto a landing deck. Throughout the three-hour tour, visitors also go over extension bridges and



**In just their second year of operator, Denali Zip Line Tours has already enjoyed lots of success. One of the Valley's newest tour attractions is also one of its fastest.**

a rappel, all of which provide excitement and fun for the guests.

Sandra Loomis, a veteran of the Talkeetna tourism industry for years, serves as the marketing manager and is also a guide. This summer, she and her team of guides have been busy hosting tour operators and travel writers on numerous familiarization tours.

"We've hosted travel writers and their first question is always, 'What's new?'" said Mat-Su CVB marketing manager

Casey Ressler. "When I mention the zip line, their eyes light up. But they don't light up as bright as they do when they actually finish the course. We've heard great responses from the groups we've sent there."

Denali Zip Line Tours ([www.denaliziplanetours.com](http://www.denaliziplanetours.com)) has a location on Main Street where people can book tours and get more information, and then a staging "hut" on Talkeetna Spur Road, where the tours embark.

## From the executive director

# Gateway Visitor Center project progressing nicely

Six years ago, on Oct. 12, 2007, the Mat-Su CVB board of directors passed a resolution in support of relocating the Mat-Su CVB visitor center. This decision came after surviving the three years of road construction on the Glenn/Parks interchange and the January 2006 opening of Mat-Su Regional Medical Center next door. At our annual meeting on Nov. 8, we will track the milestones of the new Gateway Visitor Center project and update you on the current status.

In the final days of the legislative session in Juneau last April our request for funding the Gateway Visitor Center site acquisition and design was inserted in the FY14 state capital budget. Our efforts to meet with legislators and your messages of support helped create awareness of the project and pass the Legislature. Since the governor signed the legislation on May 21, the \$1 million grant has been transferred to the borough and coordination of the land purchase of the old Homestead RV site from MEA has begun.

We have been granted an extension of the Option to Purchase Agreement with MEA to allow the borough time to complete the required process. I'm hopeful we will have a ceremony celebrating the future site of the Gateway Visitor Center next spring and

recognizing the many individuals who have helped make this happen.

Our Nov. 8 annual membership meeting will focus on the development of this project moving forward. We will share our vision of the new facility and what opportunities it brings to our destination and local businesses. We will highlight other similar projects from Park City, Utah and Cheyenne, Wyo., which just opened new visitor centers in the past year. You won't want to miss this program. We are already working on an inspiring and informative presentation.

Right now our focus and goal is to start to solidify our potential partnerships we have been exploring the past two years with organizations and our communities. We are having conversations that will lead to a facility that embraces our entire Valley from border to border. Come learn about the opportunities this Gateway Visitor Center has for you and your business.

Yahoo, Mat-Su!

*Bonnie Quill ([bonnie@alaskavisit.com](mailto:bonnie@alaskavisit.com)) is the executive director of the Mat-Su CVB.*



**Bonnie Quill**

# Mat-Su CVB hosting borough candidate forum

The Mat-Su CVB is hosting its annual Mat-Su Borough Assembly candidates forum Thursday, Sept. 12 at noon at Evangelo's.

The candidate forum is your chance to meet the candidates and ask them questions important to you and your businesses. The program is free, and lunch may be purchased from Evangelo's for \$15.

"The forum is important because it's an opportunity to let the candidates know what their constituents feel is important to not only the tourism industry, but a wide range of other topics as well," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

Four candidates are running for two Assembly seats – Doug Glenn and Jim Sykes are squaring off for the District 1 seat, while incumbent Noel Woods is facing a challenge from Matthew Beck for the District 2 seat.

Candidates responded to a Mat-Su CVB questionnaire (see below) focusing on tourism issues facing the Mat-Su Valley. At the forum, participants will be able to submit questions to a moderator, who will then give each candidate a chance to respond.

To RSVP to the luncheon, please e-mail Justin Saunders at [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

## Borough Assembly candidates share their views

Each election cycle, the Mat-Su CVB surveys the candidates for the Mat-Su Borough Assembly with a four-topic questionnaire, focusing on tourism industry topics. Here are the responses to this year's candidate survey:

### Question 1

As with most local and regional convention & visitors bureaus, the Mat-Su CVB receives monies collected by the borough through a bed tax of 5 percent. This year, the assembly approved during budget deliberations an appropriation of \$715,000 for the fiscal year 2014 in a grant agreement with the Mat-Su CVB. This equates to 65% of the projected transient accommodations tax (bed tax) collection of \$1.1 million. The assembly supported action to extend the existing grant agreement with the Mat-Su CVB for three years with the above formula. Do you support the existing grant agreement with the Mat-Su CVB? Why or why not?

**Doug Glenn, District 1:** Favor.

**Jim Sykes, District 1:** Favor. The secured funding source is good for the borough, the Mat-Su CVB and sustained tourism growth that benefits our communities with local jobs and business opportunities. The sharing ratio has been successful in the past and with current expansions in facilities and transportation upgrades it should be easier for Mat-Su CVB to invite more visitors to spend more time in our area.

**Noel Woods, District 2:** Favor. I believe that an agreement with the assembly is a declaration of intent and trust between the two parties.

**Matthew Beck, District 2:** Favor.

### Question 2

Because of state and local budget worries, there is concern among tourism businesses that other groups and government will increasingly look at bed tax revenues as a funding source for non-tourism expenditures. Would you support the use of bed tax monies for non-tourism purposes? If yes, what?

**Glenn, District 1:** Oppose.

**Sykes, District 1:** Oppose. The bed tax was specifically intended to enhance our tourism sector with more jobs, business opportunities and facilities that welcome more visitors to experience our wonderful Valleys. The Gateway Visitor Center is a most welcome addition as well as other visitor upgrades at campgrounds, rest stops and information pullouts.

**Woods, District 2:** No.

**Beck, District 2:** Oppose.

### Question 3

On Aug. 3, 2010, the assembly adopted the Mat-Su Borough Economic Development Strategic Plan. Tourism is identified in the plan as an important opportunity for economic development and recommends increasing tourism marketing efforts. Along with other borough industries, where you rate the importance of tourism?

**Glenn, District 1:** Very important.

**Sykes, District 1:** High importance. I fully support the 2010 economic development plan and its recommendations for the tourism sector. The course charted for expanding tourism and infrastructure is a good one that has high expectations of success in the implementation phase. Both

total value and an increase in jobs should flow from coordinated marketing for our many excellent visitor destinations.

**Woods, District 2:** I agree with the borough residents who try to make a living from tourism enterprise. It is very important. I agree with the assembly and their efforts to improve tourism potential with winter time activities and fisheries management concerns as shown by funding support.

**Beck, District 2:** My hope as an Assembly member is to protect farmland that is quickly disappearing to hasty development. Second, I want to partner with our local school district to build and sustain our strong education system. Supporting strong tourism would be the next item on my list of priorities. My closest friends are local farmers and buses with tourists stop every year to tour their farms. Our agriculture and its part in the history of FDR's Rural Rehabilitation Program is an attractive part of the Mat-Su Valley that visitors find fascinating. So for me, farming and tourism go hand-in-hand. If people learn to value the historic value and the current impact that farming has on the economy of this place, perhaps we won't be so quick to allow farmland to be plowed under for houses and other building projects that could be located elsewhere.

### Question 4

The completed Tourism Infrastructure Needs Study (June 2008) has identified projects that would increase the economic impact of tourism in the Valley. A top priority is development of a partnership South Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center. The Mat-Su CVB received a National Scenic Byways grant to

## SURVEY

Continued from Page 4

complete a feasibility study for the new Gateway Visitor Center and in June 2010 completed the plan and identified a site (Mile 36 Glenn Hwy.). We urge you to review the study at [www.matsuvallyvisitorcenter.com](http://www.matsuvallyvisitorcenter.com). The assembly listed the Gateway on its legislative priorities and the Mat-Su CVB board and members communicated the benefits to our legislators. The borough received \$1 million in the FY14 State Capital Budget for site acquisition and design. Do you support the development of a new South Mat-Su Valley Gateway Visitor Center? Why or why not?

**Glenn, District 1:** I am in favor of the new visitor center.

**Sykes, District 1:** Yes, I enthusiastically support the new Gateway Visitor Center. I enjoyed reviewing the well-done feasibility study with achievable goals to accommodate all types of visitors from around the world, in-state and our Valley locals. I like the attention to both indoor and outdoor experiences for visitors. It is essential to connect to the wide variety of natural, cultural and recreational opportunities that will help group our tourism economy. The stewardship portion is also important as a way for all of us to keep our Valley the best place to live, work and play for ourselves, our visitors and our grandchildren.

**Woods, District 2:** I support this project. It will be many years in development, with lots of obstacles. This should be a very interesting enterprise. The end will prove to have great attraction.

**Beck, District 2:** I have reviewed this project and support it 100 percent. Of course, I'd like to see it close to Palmer along the Glenn Highway in District 2, but in any case, it will be an important component of welcoming visitors to the Mat-Su Valley and highlighting all the opportunities to enjoy this beautiful place. I also think it could be a destination for school field trips, so young people can learn more about where they live and the uniqueness of this place.

## CVB seeks nominations for board

The Mat-Su CVB is soliciting nominations for its board of directors. Elected directors serve three-year terms on the board, and help shape the policy and direction of the organization.

This year, four spots are open on the board, with three expiring terms coming due as well as a replacement for Ruth Kimerer, who resigned after switching jobs last spring. The top four vote-getters in the election will be seated on the board at the Mat-Su CVB annual meeting on Nov. 8.

Self-nominations are accepted, and all nominations are reviewed by the Nominations Committee prior to being placed on the official ballot. Interested members should submit a declaration of candidacy no later than Oct. 1, by e-mailing Bonnie Quill at [bonnie@alaskavisit.com](mailto:bonnie@alaskavisit.com).

By Oct. 4, candidates should submit a 300-word statement and a color photograph.

"Serving on the board of directors is a great way to help guide the CVB into the future," Quill said. "You are representing the membership, and providing guidance for the industry as a whole."

*"Serving on the board of directors is a great way to help guide the CVB into the future. You are representing the membership, and providing guidance for the industry as a whole."*

- Bonnie Quill,  
Mat-Su CVB Executive Director

Board members are expected to participate in 4-6 board meetings a year, as well as a few special meetings throughout the year.

After review of the candidates, the ballots will be mailed to members no later than Oct. 8. All ballots must be returned to the CVB no later than 5 p.m. Oct. 30. Ballots remained sealed until the elections committee meets on Nov. 1 to open the ballots and count them.

The three terms expiring belong to Cheryl Metiva, Mark Austin and Darlene Hunter, in addition to the vacancy created by Kimerer's resignation.

Continuing on the board are Karen Harris, Steve Zadra, Craig Saunders, Dee Dee Kay, Mabel Wimmer and Nicole Bendle.

## MEETING: Gateway panel of experts

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"We're excited to bring up Bill Malone. He's someone who was instrumental in a project similar to this one, and he knows what it takes - and what it means for a community," said Bonnie Quill, the Mat-Su CVB executive director. "He'll be sharing his experiences with our membership, from site design to interpretive displays and kiosks."

Quill will also share photos and features from a new welcome center south of Cheyenne, Wyo. that opened in Sept. 2012, and give an update on the Gateway Visitor Center's project timeline.

The annual meeting starts at 9 a.m. at Evangelo's and continues with the annual awards luncheon, when the CVB honors the best of the best in the tourism industry. The luncheon starts at noon (also at Evangelo's), following the Voice of the Membership meeting at 11 a.m. Members are encouraged to present any questions, comments or suggestions to the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors during the membership meeting, where the marketing plan and an organizational overview will

### Mat-Su CVB Annual Meeting

Friday, Nov. 8

Evangelo's banquet room

9 a.m.-11 a.m.

Gateway Visitor Center panel discussion

11 a.m.-noon

Voice of the Membership business meeting

Noon-1:30 p.m.

Stars of the Industry luncheon

be given to the membership.

Members also have the opportunity to submit resolutions for the board and the general membership to consider. Resolutions should be submitted to the Mat-Su CVB no later than Nov. 1.

For information regarding the annual meeting, interested members can contact Justin Saunders, membership manager, at 746-5032 or via e-mail at [justin@alaskavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaskavisit.com).

# Stars honored in November

The Mat-Su CVB will honor the “Stars of the Industry” during the annual awards luncheon on Nov. 8 at Evangelo’s. Each November, in conjunction with the annual meeting, the CVB honors members who have shined during the last year.

Nominations are now being solicited for award winners. Members can use this page of the newsletter to submit nominations.

The Cheechako Award is given annually to a business that has not only survived, but prospered during its infancy. Starting a business is a challenge, but award winners in this category have overcome this hurdle and enjoyed success. Recent winners include Denali Brewing Company and Turkey Red.

The Tourism Angel Award is handed out to an individual who goes above and beyond expectations in promoting tourism in the Mat-Su Valley. Award winners in the past have contributed to Mat-Su CVB’s efforts to market the Mat-Su Valley, and have the entire tourism industry in mind in their promotional efforts. Recent winners include Dan McDonough and Cindy Bettine.

The Gold Star Award is given to a business or organization that led the way in the tourism industry in the last year. Winners have been identified as leaders in the industry, and have helped other tourism businesses to succeed based on their efforts. Recent honorees include Matanuska Electric Association and the Mat-Su Health Foundation.

The Northern Lights Award honors a community or organization that has developed and promoted tourism in the past year. Winners in recent years include the Glacier View community and Chickaloon Village.

Other special awards are also considered. In the past, the CVB has given out the “It Happens” award to a business that has taken lemons and turned them into lemonade, and also the “Spirit of Tourism” award that honors an individual who has left a life-long mark on the industry. After nominations are received, the Awards Committee meets to review them and choose award winners. For information on the award nomination process, interested people can contact Justin Saunders at 746-5032 or Justin@alaskavisit.com.

## Award nomination form

### **Northern Lights Award**

*Honors a community in the Mat-Su Borough that has distinguished itself for outstanding tourism promotion and/or development.*

I nominate:

### **Gold Star Award**

*This prestigious award recognizes a business or organization that has made a significant accomplishment in the tourism industry.*

I nominate:

### **Tourism Angel Award**

*Awarded to an individual who has supported and assisted Mat-Su CVB and has shown true concern for the success and growth of all members in the Mat-Su Borough.*

I nominate:

### **Cheechako Award**

*Awarded to a new tourism business, organization or entity showing entrepreneurial zeal and managing not only to survive, but to thrive in its early years.*

I nominate:

### **... It Happens Award**

*Awarded to an individual, business or organization that took a lemon and made lemonade. It is intended to laugh with, not at, others!*

I nominate:

### **Special Awards**

*If you feel someone deserves recognition but doesn’t fit a category, tell us who they are and why they merit special commendation!*

Submit nominations to Mat-Su CVB by Oct. 15. Mat-Su CVB; 7744 E. Visitors View Ct.; Palmer, AK 99645; Fax (907) 746-2688

# Travel writers, bloggers spend summer visiting Valley

The Mat-Su CVB has been busy highlighting the Valley to travel journalists this summer, including an extended visit hosted exclusively in the Mat-Su.

In August, the Mat-Su CVB hosted travel blogger/writer Pam Mandel on a four-day trip. While the CVB partners with the state on numerous journalist visits, Mandel's visit was based solely in the Mat-Su Valley.

"We've brought writers up for Mat-Su specific trips at least once a year, and sometimes twice a year, because editorial coverage is so important," said Mat-Su CVB marketing and communications manager Casey Ressler. "Stories and photos online, in print and on the air carry a lot of weight with travelers, and give us a reach far beyond what we could attain with traditional advertising efforts."

Mandel trekked on Matanuska Glacier, visited the Palmer Musk Ox Farm, visited Dream a Dream Dog Farm in Willow, and then proceeded north to Talkeetna where she went flightseeing, on a jet boat excursion, visited the Talkeetna Historical Society Museum and saw a birch syrup operation. She was also hosted by Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge, Talkeetna Roadhouse and Alaska Garden Gate B&B.

"Pam was unique in that it's the first time we've targeted a blogger. Even while she was here, the results were immediate. She Tweeted photos and comments to her 18,000 followers while she was actually doing the activities, which was great," Ressler said. "They provoked online conversations that have continued long



**Pelle Nilssen, a travel writer from Norway, talks with Mark Austin of the Palmer Musk Ox Farm in June. Nilssen was one of 18 travel writers to visit the Valley this summer.**



**National Parks Service Ranger Jay Katz talks to Hotaka Tazawa, right, and Tomoko Koyama during a press trip in July. Tazawa writes for one of Japan's largest newspaper travel sections and was working on a story about climbers coming to Talkeetna. Koyama is the state's public relations contractor in Japan.**

after Pam went home. It's great to reach that many people, before she ever even writes a story based on her trip."

In addition to Mandel, the Mat-Su CVB participated in several journalist familiarization trips this summer.

Since April, the Mat-Su CVB has assisted 18 journalists from print, radio, television and online outlets. Five of those writers were international writers from Norway, Japan and Germany, while two of them were in-state writers looking for tourism angles.

Each writer who visits has a particular angle they are looking for, and the Mat-Su CVB tries to tailor each trip to the specific interests.

In July, two national food journalists toured Pyrah's Pioneer Peak Farm and had lunch at Turkey Red as part of a focus on locally-grown and locally-prepared food, for example. Other angles included Japanese mountain climbers coming to Talkeetna to climb Denali; fly fishing the Parks Highway streams; dog mushing; glacier accessibility and trekking; and hiking opportunities an hour's drive from Anchorage.

The Mat-Su CVB works closely with the state of Alaska's public relations firm, Thompson & Co., to assist travel writers

with Mat-Su portions of their statewide itineraries. Often, Thompson & Co. contacts the Mat-Su CVB, and we in turn contact our members to see if they would like to host the writers, if it's a good fit.

"We wouldn't be able to give these journalists such a great experience without the cooperation of our partners," Ressler said. "Thanks to the generosity of our members, we're able to give travel writers something they can't get anywhere else in Alaska."

The Mat-Su CVB has also worked with Visit Anchorage to coordinate Mat-Su itineraries for their visiting writers a few times this year.

"It's a great partnership between our organization, Visit Anchorage and the state," Ressler said. "We all benefit from positive coverage in national and international travel publications, so by working together, we ensure the journalists have a great experience every step of their Alaska journey."

The Mat-Su CVB will be represented at Alaska Media Road Show in Santa Barbara, Calif., in late October. There, one-on-one appointments are scheduled with some of the leading travel writers and editors in the country. Mandel's visit was the result of the CVB's Road Show participation.

## From the membership

**Sheep Mountain Lodge** is serving meals daily from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. through Sept. 15. The berry picking is great this year and they have a Fall Colors special currently running. Sheep Mountain Lodge will close for the winter season on Sept. 23 and re-open May 16 for cabin rentals.

**Pyrah's Pioneer Park Farm** is hosting its annual Fall Festival on Sept. 21, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Games, hay rides, food and fun! Tickets are \$20 for families of four (\$3 each additional person), or \$6 per person. The farm is also hosting a free "special edition" from noon to 5 p.m. on Sept. 20 for those who need special physical accommodations at the farm.

**The Reindeer Farm** will be open through Sept. 21. The last day we are open for the summer is September 21. The farm will

reopen every Saturday in October from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. for a Fall Family Fun event. It features a hay maze, reindeer tours, pony rides, spooky walk, pumpkin patch. The farm is hosting a Haunted Hay Maze Oct. 25, 26 and 31, as a fund raiser for the Palmer High Music Department. The maze is open from 8-11 p.m.

**Geneva Woods Pharmacy** is celebrating 35 years of providing exceptional health care services throughout Alaska. With this celebration the pharmacy is bringing some positive changes. Please welcome our new president, Dan Afrasiabi. Dan has initiated a new logo and slogan, "There's No Place Like Healthy," along with a re-commitment to exceptional customer service.

**Phillips Cruises & Tours** is cruising

through Sept. 30. Gather up your friends and family then head to Whittier for a day full of glacier and wildlife viewing on the 26 Glacier Cruise or Glacier Quest Cruise. Narration by U.S. Forest Service Rangers, hot lunch, and free Captain's Log and a signature no seasickness guarantee. Plan to enter the Whittier tunnel at 10:30 or 11:30 a.m. Visit [www.26glaciers.com](http://www.26glaciers.com) or call 1-800-544-0529.

**Visit Anchorage** welcomes a new membership representative, Anna Salazar, to the team. Salazar was born and raised in Anchorage, and got her start in tourism six years ago as a tour guide for Princess before joining the Alaska Railroad. Anna looks forward to working with current and potential members in the Mat-Su Valley. Anna can be reached at [asalazar@anchorage.net](mailto:asalazar@anchorage.net).

## Mat-Su CVB hosting winter tourism luncheon in Talkeetna

The Mat-Su CVB is hosting a winter tourism roundtable discussion in Talkeetna in October, and members from around the Valley are encouraged to attend and give their viewpoints about winter tourism opportunities and challenges.

The event starts at noon on Oct. 4 at Twister Creek Restaurant (Denali Brewing Company) in Talkeetna. Important issues and topics coming out of the discussion will then be presented during a special Alaska Travel Industry Association winter tourism summit in Sitka the following week, in conjunction with the state tourism convention.

"In the last two years, we've hosted

*"We've hosted several roundtable discussions in different communities, as a way to connect with members who may not be able to make it to monthly luncheons during the winter."*

- Justin Saunders,

several roundtable discussions in different communities, as a way to connect with members who may not be able to make it to monthly luncheons during the winter," said Justin Saunders, the Mat-Su CVB membership manager. "We hope to see everyone from the Susitna Valley area at the October roundtable in Talkeetna."

Twister Creek will have menu items for

purchase for lunch, but there is no cost to just attend the roundtable discussion.

If members are unable to make it, they are encouraged to submit information and questions to [justin@alaksavisit.com](mailto:justin@alaksavisit.com).

"We'd love to see some new faces, and new ideas," Saunders said. "The networking opportunities are important for businesses."

The winter tourism roundtable will take the place of the regularly scheduled monthly luncheon for October.

In November, the annual meeting takes place Nov. 8 at Evangelo's. There is no luncheon scheduled for December due to the holidays.

## Stay connected!



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## Industry calendar of events

Sept. 12	Mat-Su CVB Monthly Luncheon Mat-Su Borough Assembly Candidate Forum	Evangelo's – Noon
Sept. 19-20	Western Association of CVBs Convention Mat-Su CVB staff will attend	Los Angeles
Oct. 4	Mat-Su CVB Monthly Membership Luncheon Winter Tourism Roundtable – Talkeetna	Twister Creek Restaurant, noon
Oct. 7-10	Alaska Travel Industry Association Convention Mat-Su CVB staff will attend	Sitka
Oct. 27-29	Alaska Media Road Show Mat-Su CVB staff will attend	Santa Barbara, Calif.
Nov. 8	Mat-Su CVB Annual Meeting Gateway Visitor Center panel discussion 9-11 a.m. Voice of the Membership business meeting 11 a.m.-noon Stars of the Industry awards luncheon Noon	Evangelo's
November	Alaska Down Under Sales Mission Casey Ressler will attend in conjunction with State of Alaska Note: Sales mission is still being planned, dates to be announced later	Australia/New Zealand
Nov. 28-29	Thanksgiving Mat-Su CVB offices will be closed, reopen on Monday, Dec. 2	

## Mat-Su Visitor Center closing for winter

The Mat-Su Visitor Information Center will close for the winter season on Sept. 15, bringing an end to a summer assisting visitors and showing them what the Mat-Su Valley has to offer.

VIC manager Lorraine Jallen said her staff did a great job again this summer, referring visitors to local attractions, restaurants and lodging.

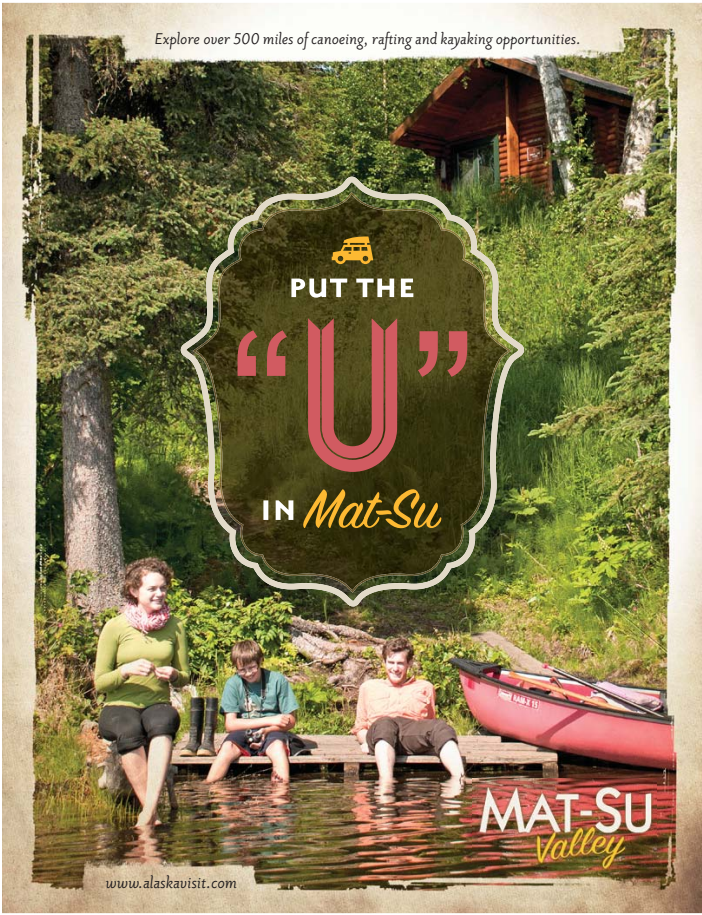
"We love to show them what they can do and see here," Jallen said. "If they stop in and find out a few things they didn't know about, they'll stay longer, and that's good."

This year, Jallen said approximately 3,000 visitors stopped by the center, which is located at Mile 35.5 Parks Hwy. Visitors came from nearly every state in the U.S., as well as numerous international destinations.

The VIC closes from mid-September to mid-May each year, but the Mat-Su CVB remains open year-round in the lower level of the visitor center. The center will be the location for the annual Veterans Day celebration at the adjacent Veterans Wall of Honor on Nov. 11 and is a polling location on election days.



This photo, taken on the Reed Lakes Trail in Hatcher Pass, was part of the Mat-Su CVB's annual photo shoot, which takes place for four days each summer. This year's shoot included Independence Mine, Talkeetna, Friday Flings and downtown Palmer, the Musk Ox Farm and the Reindeer Farm.



These two ads are part of a new in-state campaign that began this summer - “Put The U in Mat-Su”

YAHOO!

# Mat-Su

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