



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 April 18, 2018

Cadillac Area Tourism Celebrates Success and Volunteerism

Cadillac, Michigan. Over 100 area businesses and volunteers celebrated last night at the Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau (CAVB) Annual Meeting and Tourism Awards Banquet, held at Cherry Grove Event Center. The event presented area tourism impact and presented seven (7) awards, several milestone recognition plaques and words of thanks to the CAVB Board, Staff and office volunteers. The celebration kicked off with a Economics Tourism Report *stating that visitor spending in Wexford County had increased from \$69M in 2011 to \$124M in 2016, or an estimated \$130M in 2017.

What the presentation didn't get into are the details of how this compares to the other counties in our region:

County	2011	2016	% increase
Antrim	\$ 76.84	\$ 89.90	15%
Benzie	\$ 106.27	\$ 115.68	8%
Charlevoix	\$ 241.45	\$ 313.26	23%
Emmet	\$ 322.47	\$ 363.39	11%
Grand traverse	\$ 376.78	\$ 426.85	12%
Kalkaska	\$ 52.89	\$ 57.45	8%
Leelanau	\$ 94.85	\$ 116.03	18%
Manistee	\$ 137.68	\$ 143.10	4%
Missaukee	\$ 35.71	\$ 39.28	9%
Wexford	\$ 69.92	\$ 124.53	44%
Region	\$ 1,514.86	\$ 1,789.47	15%
State	\$ 20,500.69	\$ 23,742.37	14%

Comparatively the **CAVB occupancy numbers**, or hotel rooms sold per day during this same timeframe shows that in 2011 just over 65,000 hotel room nights were sold, to 93,000 hotel room nights in 2017. These numbers are only from the 14 Visitors Bureau district hotels in Cadillac. Showing a 42% increase during that same timeframe. This means that since 2011 the additional marketing efforts of the CAVB has helped Wexford county gain an addition \$61 million* to its tourism based business annual cash flow.

“Since 2012 we’ve been moving the needle with innovative marketing and community outreach,” says Joy VanDrie, Executive Director of the Cadillac Area Visitor’s Bureau during her presentation last night, “we have two new large projects to accomplish this year, a Certified Explorer Program and a new website. These combined with our current marketing efforts will increase our area visibility in the digital travel arena even more.”



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Robb Munger, a private developer and CEO/President of Exodus in Grand Rapids, was the Key note Speaker at the event touching on his experiences helping people and how collaboration is key to success. He also spoke about how the successful numbers presented were why he was investing in the Cadillac Region. “This is a great area, with friendly people creating a successful atmosphere to get people like myself excited about investing here,” Robb Munger stated, “sometimes you don’t realize how great things are until a report or someone from the outside is able to remind you.”

The rest of the evening was truly celebrating success stories of area businesses and people who love Cadillac.

- **Recreation Excellence Award** (Business/ Organization) Winner is **Merritt Speedway**.
- **Allan Green Memorial - Recreation Excellence Award** (Individual Award) Winners are **Tim Meyer & Jack Meyer** of Caberfae Peaks
- **Restaurateur of the Year Award** winner is the **Burke Family & Burke’s Waterfront Restaurant**
- **Volunteer of the Year Award Winner** (Visitors Bureau) - **Lindsey Westdorp**,
- **Volunteer of the Year Award Winner** (Festivals & Events) – **Mark Featherston**
- **Volunteer of the Year Youth Award Winner** (Festivals & Events) – **Spencer Richardson**

The award ceremony was supported by the Miss NASF Court, each award winner received a special crystal award and an official recognition certificate from Congressman Moolenaar’s Office, U.S. House of Representatives.

Nominations for these awards are encouraged, with nomination forms available on cadillacmichigan.com after the first of the year annually. All residents in the greater Cadillac area are encouraged to nominate people and businesses they believe should be celebrated.

The Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau markets the greater Cadillac area thru content on the follow digital platforms www.cadillacmichigan.com www.explorecedillac.org www.facebook.com/visitgreatercedillac www.twitter.com/visitcedillac www.pinterest.com/visitcedillac www.youtube.com/cadillacareavb

The CAVB places over \$200,000 in digital and print advertising with regional publications like Midwest Living, Pure Michigan Magazine, Michigan Angler, AAA Living, Google, Facebook, etc. and has marketing partnerships with regional and statewide organizations like the MDNR, Pure Michigan, Michigan’s Great Outdoors, Great Lakes Fisherman’s Digest, West Michigan Tourist Association, etc. For more information on the CAVB go to www.cadillacmichigan.com and request a Travel Guide, or e-mail staff with any questions to visit@cadillacmichigan.com

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Additional Award information:

Cadillac Certified Explorer.

We all have an ever growing need for volunteers to support festivals and events. Over the past few years the CAVB has developed a digital list of over 100 area residents that are willing to help. This new program will engage, inform and motivate volunteers. Around the tourism industry there are several programs at various costs, the CAVB will invest \$10,000 in this first year to get it up and running. The Certified Explorer Program will enable the CAVB to help support group events, festivals and offer residents ample opportunities to engage at various levels. Our Certified Explorer Program will reach out to retirees, youth, parents, employers, young professionals and every facet of residents we have. The program will offer cool vests to identify them, they will have badges and participants will help build the program as it matures. The Certified Explorer program will need Trained Guides, of which we will be reaching out to engage an initial smaller number of residents, those that want to lead or have influence, to be the guiding force to further develop the program. Our Certified Explorers will know most everything about our area, they will be empowered with not only knowledge but experience – they will have on-line training as well as attraction experience opportunities.

New website for www.cadillacmichigan.com

Our digital presence on the 'world wide web' is 5 years old, which doesn't seem old, but in the digital world it's almost ancient. We host over 400 pages of information. This project will over-haul all content, updating photos, adding video and integrating all of our digital platforms – the new website will deliver a web experience aimed at speaking to the visitor during their primary stages of vacation planning while giving them ample opportunity to share their experience with others. Area businesses will be asked to engage with the CAVB even more this summer, when the Summer Intern will be asking probing questions to help update all of the content. Efforts are underway currently to re-design, organize and deliver updated information later this summer to in an effort to capture more travelers attention and make them want to come to our little sandbox in NW Michigan.

Recreation Excellence Award (Business/Organization) Winner - Merritt Speedway.

This award recognizes area businesses and organizations who demonstrate Excellence in Providing Recreational Opportunities to our visitors. Joining the ranks of Caberfae Peaks Ski & Golf Resort (2012), Friends of the Cadillac Pathway (2013), Cadillac Winter Promotions (2014), Cadillac Garden Club (2015), Rotary Club of Cadillac (2016) and Friends of the White Pine Trail (2017).

Merritt Speedway is being appreciated for their continued offering of a family friendly recreational opportunity for the past 50 years. It is not without bumps and bruises along the way, but with their strong dedication and willingness to collaborate with area businesses, and racing enthusiasts we would not have one of the few dirt



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race tracks left in Michigan. The speedway has been dubbed “Michigan’s Premier Dirt Track”, and this year it will feature full programs of racing entertainment all summer. All eight of Merritt’s weekly divisions will make a return this season, including UMP Late Models, UMP Modifieds, B Modifieds, Lightning Sprints, Pro Stocks, Factory Stocks, Four Cylinders and Mini Wedges. Merritt Speedway has racing every Saturday night from May to September. Mike Blackmer and his Merritt Speedway Team accepted their award with pleasure.

Allan Green Memorial - Recreation Excellence Award (Individual) Winner’s - Tim Meyer & Jack Meyer

This award recognizes an individual or this a Team, who has gone ABOVE AND BEYOND in their effort to support ‘Excellence in providing Recreational Opportunities to our visitors’, supporting the mission of the Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau through continuous involvement and leadership, and has made a significant impact in their field of recreation excellence. This award winner joins the ranks of Alan Green, Avid Snowmobiler (2015) and Dave Foley, Avid Silent Sports Enthusiast (2016), Steve Knaisel, Fishing Advocate and Guru (2017).

One of the oldest ski areas in the nation, getting its start in 1938 when the Civilian Conservation Corp. (CCC) carved runs out of the Manistee National Forest. As Mr. Neff’s historical article on Michigan Skier’s website notes, that after Stage 3 the future of Caberfae looked bleak. Then Stage 4 – the Meyer Family. Locals who had been skiing Caberfae since they were kids, bought the ski area. In addition to guiding Caberfae out of bankruptcy, they also set a course to reclaim the resort’s former glory. With vision and perseverance they moved forward. Caberfae became Caberfae Peaks with the development and opening of South Peak in 1983 (fully completed in 1986) and North Peak in 1992. A triple chair on South Peak and a quad chair on North Peak gave the resort an entry into its future. Today those peaks now give Caberfae 510 feet of vertical and a commanding 360-degree vista of the Manistee National Forest from their summits, with a new triple chair and upcoming wider and new trails to be explored to the south.

Focused on skiing, and the on-hill experience has brought Caberfae to where it is today, as one of the premier, yet best kept secrets of the mid-west. Tim and Jack focused on moving dirt and making snow for the past three decades, connecting with industry experts, becoming experts, and building dedicated staff to listen to customers, the season pass holders and the weekender. Over their years they have moved thousands of tons of dirt, ran thousands of electric and utility lines up and down the hills, and crunched numbers when Mother Nature was good, or not so good. They have persevered in an industry that is being gobbled up by conglomerates. We are proud to award Tim and Jack Meyer these awards for their individual commitment to Skiing (and Snowboarding) and the greater Cadillac Community. Their son’s Tim Meyer and Pete Meyer accepted their awards on their behalf.



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Restaurateur of the Year Award – Burke Family & Burke’s Waterfront Restaurant

This award recognizes a greater Cadillac Area locally owned restaurant, for their years of dedication to the Hospitality Industry by creating a destination experience, by providing excellent customer service, quality family fare and a commitment to the Cadillac Community. Joining the ranks of the Snider Family & Marina Restaurant (2017).

The Burke family purchased Bill’s Waterfront Restaurant in 1982, renamed it Burke’s Waterfront Restaurant and since has focused on three key items: an experience with a view, a menu with something for everyone, and good home style cooking. Over the past 36 years they’ve served and employed generations of families. Few here remember the Stag’s Head downtown of which Larry owned, he was a renowned Chef of which I personally had the opportunity to know. Mrs. Burke or Mary, with their two sons Steve and Tim, along with Susan and Pam name have continued his legacy as their own since 1992. Burke’s is being honored tonight with this award, for not only the years of hard work in the restaurant business but for their level of commitment to their family, their customers and the Cadillac community. A true inspiration to all small business owners. Please join me in celebrating - The Burke Family and Burke’s Waterfront Restaurant – our 2018 Restaurateur of the Year.

Volunteer of the Year Award Winner (Visitors Bureau) - Lindsey Westdorp

This award recognizes an individual who has gone ABOVE AND BEYOND in their effort to support the mission of the Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau through continuous involvement and leadership. The award winner joins the ranks of Brian Chapman (2013), Steve Birdwell (2014), Carol Hill (2015), Jim Neff (2016), and Michele Owings Andrews (2017)

Passionate, witty, smart and organized are 4 ways to describe Lindsey. Tonight she is being appreciated for her dedication and passion over the past 6+ years for helping the area small businesses, and organizations create strong digital presences and marketing outreach. Her volunteer time “above and beyond” paid contracts has created successful websites, Facebook pages, and digital campaigns to help ‘tell the story.’ She’s spent many hours of her time on the organizing committee for several events and Board of Directors – this sets her apart from most – offering both time and talent. Her tenacity to bird-dog information from volunteers, and understand the vulnerability of ever changing content and messaging, has been key to the success of area projects she’s touched. A couple digital projects to note such as the Cadillac Visitors Bureau Facebook page – 25k strong, Cadillac Commons, Beer Fest, Freedom Fest and the list goes on. So please join me in fully appreciating Lindsey for offering her time and talents to our area.

Volunteer of the Year Award Winner (Festivals & Events) - Mark Featherston

This award recognizes an individual who has gone ABOVE AND BEYOND in their effort to support the mission of the Cadillac Area Festivals & Events through continuous involvement and leadership with area Festivals & Events. This award winner joins the ranks of Derek Anderson (2015), Sharon Flewelling (2016) and Shawn Dostal (2017).

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Mark has devoted thousands of hours of his time and creativity to several area festivals and events over the past several years. Words to describe Mark are tenacity, witty, strategic, and patient. He brings his multi-media, regional and national experience to each project and each organization he works with. Interestingly while he works in a fast paced industry, he's patient with his volunteer work. He listens, he responds thoughtfully, and every now and again lands a zinger. But the zinger is intended to make us think differently, and for the betterment of the task at hand. We are especially appreciative for his work with the North American Snow Festival – Fishing Tournament and assistance in re-tooling this event for future success. His assistance with Back to the Bricks Cruise Cadillac and leadership on the Downtown Cadillac Association Board of Directors as President since 2016 has helped increase the volunteer bases and financial stability. His ability to keep the needle moving forward, combined with his willingness to get it done – whatever it takes are the primary reasons for this recognition.

Volunteer of the Year – Youth Award Winner (Festivals & Events) - Spencer Richardson

This award, NEW this year, recognizes an area youth who has gone ABOVE AND BEYOND in their effort to support the mission of the Cadillac Area Festivals & Events through continuous involvement and leadership with area Festivals & Events. In this inaugural year, may we remind everyone that this award was created based on community feedback – this is given by a community resident to a community youth resident. Mrs. Tracy Trautner nominated Spencer, having known him as her son Daniel's best friend since childhood. Spencer exemplifies service to his community, not only is he very active in school activities, he also gives his time to community events like Back to the Bricks and NASF, and just recently beyond the US with Rotary Interact Club to El Salvador. "Spencer is always thinking, what can I do for you?," said Trautner, during the award ceremony. While some offer their time, youth like Spencer offer their leadership as well, taking action when needed and doing well without hiccups. His young ability to comprehend and engage on his feet will benefit him into his future. The CAVB hopes to continue to award this annually from here on out to foster excitement and honor in our youth to become active in the many non-school related activities, activities that are developed, supported and attended by the community as a whole.

Milestone Recognition Certificates

- **Caberfae Peaks** – just finished their 80th season, in 1938 it was the 4th ski resort built in the Midwest.
- **Cadillac Festival of the Arts** – celebrating 50 years this July, image 50 years ago in the City Park art for sale on picnic blankets.
- **Eldorado Golf Course** – Eldorado is one of only 4 courses to make the top 10 the past 2 years in a row in 'Michigan's Top 25 Golf Courses' list by Golf Advisor, one of the toughest state lists to make.
- **Goodrich Theatres** – celebrating 100 years of theatre experience in Downtown Cadillac.



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The Cadillac Area Visitors Bureau Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteers:

Julie Snider – Holiday Inn, Board President
Phil Himes – Evergreen Resort, Vice President
Joni Holly – City2Shore Realty, Treasurer
Pete Meyer – Caberfae Peaks, Director
Pete Finch – Coyote Crossing Resort, Director
Laura Dunbar – Days Inn & Adventure Island, Director
Lindsey Westdorp – Bit Social Media, Director
Joy VanDrie – CAVB, Executive Director, BOD Secretary
Stephanie Morehouse – CAVB, Admin/Marketing
Anja Wing – CAVB, Accounting
Carol Hill – CAVB, Volunteer (weekly 20-30 hours since 2014)
Chris Favor - CAVB, Volunteer (229hrs)
Margaret Briggs - CAVB, Volunteer (82hrs)
Mary Shoemaker - CAVB, Volunteer (70.5hrs)
Druce Hill - CAVB, Volunteer (57.5hrs)
Mike Peterson – CAVB, Volunteer (48 hrs)
Terry Rigby - CAVB, Volunteer (48.5hrs)
Cindy Peasly - CAVB, Volunteer (45.5hrs)
Karen Evans - CAVB, Volunteer (42.5hrs)
Chris Flanagan - CAVB, Volunteer (40hrs)
Virgil Hendrickson - CAVB, Volunteer (29.5hrs)

*[Tourism Economics Report](#) from the MEDC 2016