

# Research: Will Boost in Spending, New Ads Pay Off for Tourism Industry?

By Karen Gould

Michigan tourism generates \$17.5 billion in revenue, contributes \$971 million in state taxes, and employs 193,000 people. Tourism is big business for the state, ranking as one of the top three contributors to the economy, along with agriculture and the auto industry.

This year the state's budget for tourism is \$13.2 million, double what it was one year ago at \$5.7 million, but is it enough to compete with neighboring states like Wisconsin, which spends more than \$25 million annually on tourism promotion? Illinois, one of Michigan's tourism target markets, spends more than \$47 million to lure travelers.

George Zimmerman, vice president of Travel Michigan, said when the organization first heard about the state's proposed 21st Century Job Fund bill last year, which would add \$15 million over the next two years to the tourism

budget, the department began brainstorming how to spend the added dollars.

Last fall, the bill was signed into law and tourism officials went to work on their plans.

"All of us believe Michigan has a national quality tourism product, though even with the added money, it is not enough to fund a national campaign," said Mr. Zimmerman.

So the agency decided on three spending objectives: "Beefing up" those markets the state had targeted in 2005, including Chicago, Cleveland, and Indianapolis; going after three new markets, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Ontario; spending more on in-state marketing.

While the impact of the larger budget won't be known until the end of this year, last year's measured results revealed that every dollar spent on tourism advertising brought a return of \$3.43 in new tax money to the state, Mr.

At right: Mackinac Island's Main Street during tourist season, Monday, July 31.

Zimmerman said.

"Having those numbers has been very powerful for us," he said, and being able to show the return on investment in dollars spent was a useful tool when seeking budget dollars from state legislators.

"Frankly, because we've been doing return-on-investment studies for the last year, I think that this is one reason government legislators gave us the \$15 million. The numbers demonstrate the advertising works," he said.

A research study group compiles the data by asking people if they saw the Michigan ad, if they traveled to Michigan, and if they did travel here, how much money they spent on their trip. The group also is able to identify the type of travel that was motivated by the

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Master boat craftsman Jim Mertaugh of Hessel screws in newly chromed hardware around the hatch on the deck of Buddy.

## Buddy Has Long Les Cheneaux History

By Amy Polk

Buddy, one of the three feature boats in the 2006 Les Cheneaux Antique Wooden Boat Show and Festival of Arts Saturday, August 12, has a long history in the Les Cheneaux Islands, where she was known as the "fastest boat in the Snows," said current owner Jim Mertaugh of Hessel. She has spanned a lifetime of racing excitement.

Mr. Mertaugh was reunited with the 1930 Chris Craft after a long search. Three years ago, he got a call from Ron Reyers of Spring Lake, near Holland.

"He said if he could return the boat to where it started from, he'd be very happy," Mr. Mertaugh said. "I had been looking for that boat for years, trying to track it down, and had just about given up."

Buddy was formerly known as Betty M., named by the Miller family of the Les Cheneaux Club on Marquette Island. They ordered the 26-foot runabout through Mr. Mertaugh's father, Eugene, who held the first Chris Craft franchise and sold an estimated 500 boats for the manufacturer from 1923 to 1972. His franchise extended north from Bay City and into Canada.

"Mr. Miller wanted the fastest boat in the Snows, and that was the order given to my dad," Jim Mertaugh said. "During the 1930s, speed was a really big deal to people. It was the time when Ford developed the V-8 and was a time when people were becoming very speed conscious. They were always looking for the fastest boat or the fastest car."

The fastest boat turned out to belong to Chris Smith, owner of Chris Craft in Algonac, who raced it on the St. Claire River. It had a high-compression engine and a special bottom paint that helped the boat achieve speeds of 60 miles per hour, fast even by today's standards.

Like many of the boats brought north by Gene Mertaugh, Betty M. was driven up Lake Huron from Algonac to Hessel.

"It was usually about a 12-hour

trip," Mr. Mertaugh said. "My dad brought probably 30 to 40 boats up here that way. The only other way was to bring them up by train to St. Ignace, and he said it was harder to bring them up that way, get them off the car, and launch them back into the water. He preferred to drive them."

The Millers enjoyed Betty M. through 1939, when she was traded back to Mr. Mertaugh for a 22-foot Chris Craft called Smiley, which remains on Marquette Island and is now owned by Joseph Carr of the Les Cheneaux Club.

World War II put a stop to pleasure boating, and Betty M. sat unused through 1945.

"There was no gas available for boating, so there was no pleasure boating as we know it at the time," Mr. Mertaugh said.

At the end of the war, Bud Haywood and his family bought the boat and renamed it Buddy. The vessel was docked at the former family cottage, "Journey's End," on Big LaSalle Island and was used from 1945 through the 1960s, including about 20 years of racing, Mr. Mertaugh said.

"She was raced for so many years, people knew the boat very well around the islands," he added. "She was known for her

speed."

Buddy appeared in many old photographs of boat races in the area, and she participated in the former Labor Day races held annually in Hessel Bay. The races were one of the highlights of summer in Les Cheneaux and featured sailboat, Chris Craft, outboard, and kids boat races, among other activities. The races were started after World War II, continued for about 20 years, Mr. Mertaugh said, "and were a very festive time in the Les Cheneaux Islands."

Those boat racing days are long gone, but Dick Tobin of Hessel is trying to rejuvenate that sense of friendly competition through an annual Ned Fenlon International Trade Race between Chris Craft runabouts he launched three years ago. The race is primarily between classic, Chris Craft triple cockpits like Buddy, which is from the same era as Mr. Tobin's Whiskey Runner.

Eventually, Buddy was sold by the Haywoods to Ron Reyers, left the Les Cheneaux Islands for a brief period, and returned when Mr. Mertaugh bought it.

Buddy has been completely restored to top condition, with all new Honduras mahogany, except

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Buddy was named for one of its former owners, Bud Haywood, a summer resident of the Les Cheneaux Islands, where he raced the vessel once owned by the Chris Smith family.

## Bois Blanc Fire Dept. Gets New Pumper

Bois Blanc Township isn't accustomed to receiving new vehicles for its fire department, but with a \$262,500 check received from U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, the fire department is now equipped with a new pumper.

Residents celebrated in front of the Bois Blanc Township Hall Monday, July 17, with a check presentation by Michigan Rural Developments Director Gene DeRossett.

"This is the first brand new fire truck we've received since I can remember," said Township Treasurer Cheryl Gahn.

As is the case for many small townships, hand-me-down emergency vehicles normally make up the fire department arsenal.

The USDA funding also pays off the rest of the township's new one-ton Dodge pick-up truck with a v-shaped plow to be used at the newly extended airport runway, said Mrs. Gahn.

Township Supervisor Loren Gibbons said local resident Larry

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Bois Blanc Township officials, at a small ceremony at Township Hall Monday, July 17, accepted a \$262,500 check from Michigan Rural Development Director Gene DeRossett of the United States Department of Agriculture for the purchase of a new fire pumper and final payment for a new airport snowplow. Pictured are (from left) Township Airport Manager Greg Dickerson, Mr. DeRossett, Township Supervisor Loren Gibbons, Township Fire Chief Mike Gahn, and Assistant Fire Chief Lani White. (Photograph courtesy of Cheryl Gahn)

## Candidates Vie for Pickford Queen Title Hay Days Celebration Begins August 2

Pickford Hay Days will start this week Wednesday, August 2, with the annual hamburger bash fundraiser for the event.

Chelsea Belonga, Alicia Bjunes, Cheyenne Cline, and Kaylynn Portice, all of Pickford, are candidates for queen, to be crowned by

2005 Queen Brittne Wallis Friday night, August 4, at 7:30 p.m. Jasmine Ledy is no longer a candidate.

Miss Belonga is 14, the daughter of Keith and Gaye Belonga. She is a sophomore at Pickford High School and a member of Family, Community, and Careers Leaders of America (FCCLA). She participates in cross country running and works part-time at Main Street Cafe in Pickford.

Miss Bjunes, 16, will be a senior at Pickford High School and is the daughter of Jon and Ruth Bjunes. She is a member of the National Guard youth program and has participated in volleyball and track at Pickford High.

Miss Cline is 15 and the daughter of Kip and Lisa Cline. She will be a sophomore at Pickford High School, is a member of FCCLA, and has participated in basketball, volleyball, and track.

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Pickford Hay Days Queen candidates Chelsea Belonga (far left) and Kaylynn Portice (far right) flank the 2006 Hay Days Princess Olivia Smith and Prince Adam Skinner Wednesday, July 26. The two other candidates, Alicia Bjunes and Cheyenne Cline, were out of town and not available for the photograph.

## Gene Perry, Michael Snell To Perform This Week

Gene Perry of St. Ignace will be featured in a Locals on the Bay concert Wednesday, August 2, at 7 p.m. at St. Ignace Marina.

Mr. Perry has been playing acoustic guitar and singing as a solo act in venues in a 50-mile radius around St. Ignace for more than seven years, and is known as an occasional host of Open Mic Night events. He has recorded a CD and knows more than 300 songs. Mr. Perry said he is prepared to be a "musical chameleon for whatever a particular venue needs, but favors modern and classic rock and new Americana folk music, with a mood somewhere between Austin City Limits and MTV Unplugged."

Also at the marina, Michael Snell will perform Thursday,



Gene Perry



Michael Snell

August 3, at 7 p.m. at Bayside Live! Mr. Snell is a singer and songwriter who plays folk music with an easy listening country and folk influence. He

attributes his style to the influences of John Denver, James Taylor, and Harry Chapin.

Both concerts are free of charge.