

Mackinac Island Businesses Adjust to Staff Changes as Season Winds Down

By Bernie Nguyen

As the summer tourist season nears its conclusion, seasonal workers are beginning to return to their off-island homes, leaving some businesses strapped for help, despite a growing reliance on foreign workers.

Dave Sanderson, general manager of Mission Point Resort, said the hotel employs about 250 seasonal employees and estimates that a little more than half are citizens from other countries, working under temporary student and general work visas. By varying their employment rosters with J1 student visas and H2B seasonal work visas, which are six-month work permits, the resort tries to smooth the transition between the end of summer and its closing date, October 29. Nevertheless, the resort is a little short-staffed this fall with the departure of many of the college students.

"Most of the J-1 student visas leave between the middle and the end of September," Mr. Sanderson said, adding that some have already left. "We'll be a little short. We're looking to hire people to get us to the end of the season." Most of the openings, he said, are for food servers and desk clerks.

To prevent end-of-season staff issues, Mr. Sanderson explained that the resort looks each year at its September and October business projections and tries to tailor its hiring accordingly. A busy fall

would lead to hiring of more H2B workers, who can stay all the way to the end of October.

Mackinac State Historic Parks has also begun a gradual closing. Its downtown buildings were shut down for the season August 20, and Fort Mackinac's ticket hours have been reduced from 11.7 hours a day to 7.0 hours.

Only a third of the interpretive staff remains to help wrap things up, clean out the buildings, and maintain Fort Mackinac programs until its last day, October 8. Dave Schmidt, whose work at the Benjamin Blacksmith Shop is finished for the season, will clean out the shop and move to Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City, where he will finish out the fall. Cooking supplies and perishable food items are also sent to Michilimackinac, where the interpretive programs there can make use of them.

The experience at Fort Mackinac is by no means diminished, however, said Katie Cederholm, the education coordinator for Mackinac State Historic Parks, even though the staff is smaller and the hours are reduced.

"It's kind of a neat time for people to visit," she said. The decreasing number of visitors as the weather gradually turns cooler allows the interpreters to offer more tours and more one-on-one attention.

"It's more laid back," Ms.

Cederholm said of the fall. "The visitors are taking their time as well. The visitors can really get to know the interpreters leading the tours."

Patti Ann Moskwa, co-owner of the Yankee Rebel Tavern and Horn's Gaslight Bar, said that because of the many college students she employs and their differing schedules, she staggers the hiring so that the workers come in shifts, some in May and some in June.

"I know when I need people to fill positions, and that's how I hire," she said.

Of the estimated 75 seasonal workers she employs each summer, about 15 percent are from Jamaica. She has been in the business long enough to anticipate the needs, and knows the employment requirements of both restaurants well enough to keep things running to the end of October, when Horn's Bar closes after its annual Halloween party. The staggered employee hiring system also contributes to the transition between the busier summer months and the slower-paced autumn.

Brian Bailey, general manager of the Chippewa and Lilac Tree Hotels, said that as the summer comes to a close, about a third of the hotels' employees leave. The two hotels employ about 160 seasonal workers over the course of the summer. Only about 15 percent of the hotel's employees are college students, added Mr. Bailey, making it easier to keep the necessary number of employees on the Island even after school starts.

"The staff decreases and makes it more efficient," he said. "We go into the fall hoping that

we have really busy weekends, and during the week it's much softer. Everyone pitches in to get through those Friday nights and Saturdays.

Mr. Bailey also said that minimizing the staff during the fall

helps to lower the overhead when business is not at its peak, and that since the staff is trained, the balance can more easily be maintained during the transition from a busy summer to a more relaxed autumn.

"It's a fine line there, especially in the fall," he said.

Fort Mackinac's last day is October 9. Most downtown hotels and businesses will be closed around October 31, when Grand Hotel closes.

Everson's Furnishings Re-opens in St. Ignace



Owner Jim Everson stands next to a truck that serves his newly expanded business. Customers will now be able to get new furniture and upholstery work done under the same roof, he said.

By Paul Gingras

Everson's Upholstery in St. Ignace has relocated, changed its name, and expanded operations. The new business on First Street opened Wednesday, August 16, and is now called Everson's Home Furnishings.

Owners Jim and Kyle Everson have constructed a large building to house new furniture, bedding, flooring, and window treatments. The merchandise is under the same roof as Everson's re-upholstery operation.

"People here will give you their

business if you sell quality products and offer good service, which we're doing," said Mr. Everson. "We want to keep people from having to drive elsewhere to shop."

The re-upholstery shop, staffed full time by Bill Harju, gives customers the option to repair a piece of furniture or give it an entirely new look. "Nothing needs to go back to the factory, not even bedding," Mr. Everson said.

The Eversons have been in the re-upholstery business for 30 years and also own a furniture store in Newberry.

As a new furniture dealer, Mr. Everson said, he enjoys working with credible suppliers, such as

Simmons, La-Z-Boy, Flexsteel, and Lane, who protect their dealers and offer proven quality.

Mrs. Everson manages the books and her father, Carl Avery, is the full-time salesman.

A 1974 graduate of LaSalle High School, Mr. Everson has lived in St. Ignace all of his life. He worked at his parent's business, The Stop Party Store, when he was a boy. Of his eight siblings, his brother, Pete, and his sister, Jean Massaway, remain in the St. Ignace area.

The Eversons have two boys. Nathan, 21, a graduate student at Ferris State University, and Evan, 14, a freshman at LaSalle High School.

Labor Day Weekend SALE
 Thurs., Aug. 31st thru Sun., Sept. 3rd Only 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

All Remaining Men's/Ladies Shorts...15% Off
 All Sweaters/Sweatshirts...\$15⁰⁰ ea....up to 75% Off
 All Ink Cartridges In-Stock...15% off
 (No Charge Accounts)

TracFone Prepaid Wireless \$19⁹⁹ ea.
 Limit 3 per cust.

Bring in this Coupon & Receive **50% Off**
 Cell Phone Cases, DC Adapters & Batteries
 In-Stock (Global Only)

RadioShack & Marine DEALER STORE
 Fall Hours: Sept. 5th - Jan. 1st
 Mon.-Sat. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
 188 N. State Street, St. Ignace
 643-6650

CLOSED MONDAY, SEPT. 4TH



For more information call 906-643-8717 or 800-997-8717. Sponsored by St. Ignace Visitors Bureau, St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce, St. Ignace Hospitality Growth Inc.

ST. IGNACE
Pride of Baltimore II
 September 2nd & 3rd, 2006

Deck tours are open to the public at Arnold Line Ferry Dock
 99 N. State Street, St. Ignace

Tickets available at Arnold Line Dock #1
Admission: \$5⁰⁰

Sunday, September 3rd
 Private deck tours, hors d'oeuvres and cocktails with entertainment provided by Mike Ridley from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Tickets available at St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce
\$50⁰⁰ each ticket

Early 1900s Style Flowers To Be Planted at Old Mackinac Light

By opening day 2007, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in Mackinaw City will be enhanced by colorful blooms and berries that experts believe surrounded the Lake Huron beacon during the early 1900s. Planting of the lemon custard lilies, red twig

dogwood, serviceberry, and northern red oak will commence this fall and be completed May 14.

The lighthouse, now a museum operated by Mackinac State Historic Parks, guided sailors through the Straits of Mackinac in 1892 and shepherded ship traffic through the region until the completion of the Mackinac Bridge in 1957.

Visitors touring the lighthouse learn about importance of this strategic light and hear about the lives of lighthouse keepers through interactive exhibits and period settings.

The plants will be purchased with \$500 from the Principal Financial Group Foundation Inc. of Des Moines, Iowa, through the Perennial Garden Club of Cheboygan County.

The Perennial Garden Club, presided over by Ramona Boyce, is one of only 193 nationwide to be awarded a grant from the company's program, which is operated in affiliation with National Garden Clubs Inc. to support civic development projects honoring those who serve or served our country, which in this case would be lighthouse keepers.

Les Cheneaux Area Artisan Cooperative and Youth Advisory Committee Presents

MUSIC and ART DOCKSIDE

Saturday, September 2
10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 HESSEL MARINA, HESSEL, MI

Art - Art Auction
Folk Music - Jazz
Southern Rock - Modern Rock

Kids Craft Area
 Concessions

FREE ADMISSION!

Moose Lodge 999
 Mackinac Trail, St. Ignace

Pig Roast
 Sunday, Sept. 3rd
 3 to 7 p.m.

LIVE MUSIC
 by Country Classic

Members & Qualified Guests

Chippewa COUNTY Agricultural FAIR
Stalwart 101st ANNUAL
 September 7-8-9

Thursday
 Entry Day 2 to 9 p.m.

Friday
 Judging Hall Exhibits 8 a.m.
 Judging Horses 10 a.m.
 Judging Youth Livestock 2 p.m.

Weigh Horses at Pickford Elevator 3 to 5 p.m.
 Pet Show 5:30 p.m.
 Light Weight Horse Pull 7 p.m.

Saturday
 Craft Show 9-5
 Speed & Action Events 10 a.m.
 Judging Youth Livestock 1 p.m.
 Horse Shoe Competition Noon
 Garden Tractor Pull 12:30 p.m.
 Kids' Games 2 p.m.
 Pony Pulling 4 p.m.
 Heavy Weight Horse Pull 5 p.m.

Antique Demonstrations & History Display All Day Fri. & Sat.
 Lunches and Meals Served on Grounds and Church

JR's TAILGATE PUB

Friday, Sept. 1
 Live Music by Shake the Baby

Saturday, Sept. 2
 Karaoke
 Win a Jacuzzi Room

Sunday, Sept. 3
 Happy Hour Music 3 to 7 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 4
 Karaoke
 Win a Jacuzzi Room

Downtown Mackinaw City across from the IGA
 101 East Central Ave. • 231-436-8540