

Mackinac Island Residents Want People To See Real, Working Town

Public Shares Ideas for TV News Series

By Karen Gould
Mackinac Island residents want television news viewers to see that Mackinac Island is a real, working town with its own creative network of logistics and strong sense of historic preservation. Residents emphasized those aspects of Island living, as well as current marketing challenges, when they met Thursday, September 7, to share ideas with a

Traverse City television station which plans to film a "Your Town" series on the Island. "This isn't a theme park," resident Jason St. Onge told the WPBN (TV 7&4) news producers. "At five o'clock, we don't close down. We have a sewer department, a water department, a fire department, a working city council, and police. This is a real town. Visitors see UPS delivered by horse-drawn dray. Well, at six o'clock, they don't put that away and get the UPS truck out. This is really how we operate here."

"This isn't a theme park. At five o'clock, we don't close down."

— Jason St. Onge, Island resident

Several years ago, news anchor Dave Walker, who facilitated the September 7 meeting, said the station aired a winter sports feature that followed the Beaver Island boys basketball and girls volleyball teams as they traveled to compete against Mackinac Island Public School teams. The trip involved vehicle travel and two separate airplane flights each way. Mr. Walker said the feature generated a lot of comments from viewers.

"Living on an Island or working on an Island seasonally, if you're not a year-around resident, has to be a rather unique and different lifestyle," said Mr. Walker; "something that most people in our viewing area have never experienced or never will experience."

He said the station plans to produce film segments of life on Mackinac Island from October to April and what drives the economy in the off-season, rather than focus on tourism. Those attending the meeting explained to the news crew that living on Mackinac Island is different than living on other islands. Attendees said Mackinac Island residents have a commitment to historic preservation, while operating as a year-around community whose main industry is summer tourism.

"Everybody here chooses to be here," said Mike Hart. "We chose every day to be here. We chose the inconvenience, the added expense, the sometimes-isolation. The tourist trade is the means by which we support ourselves here."

Mr. Hart, who sits on the city council with Mr. St. Onge, said although the two men have varying political opinions, "We still agree this is a place to preserve and protect."

Greg Hokans, chief of development and marketing at Mackinac State Historic Parks, agreed. "With more than 80 percent of the Island owned by the state park, Mr. Hokans talked about historical and land preservation. The mission statement at the park is to protect, preserve, and present, which he said includes historic and natural resources, the way of life, and the community of Mackinac Island.

"We present all summer long, but all year long we protect and preserve," he said.

Bob Tagatz, historian and concierge at Grand Hotel said the community has done an "amazing" job preserving historical aspects of the Island, and especially the horse culture.

"You don't come and look at history, you step off the boat and you live history," he said.

"We have to compete with the Cedar Points, Disney Worlds, Six Flags, but we're better than all of them because we're the real thing. This is where it really happened," said Mr. Hokans. "Our history, which goes back over five centuries, really happened here. The first ground battle of the War of 1812 really happened here."

Armand "Smi" Horn said that preservation of the Island is a constant part of life.

Mission Point Resort General Manager Dave Sanderson, who moved to Mackinac Island last winter, talked about the sense of community he had found.

"This is a very easy place to move to," he said. "This is a very easy place to receive product. It's just done in unconventional ways."

"The story lies in the logistics of how the Island functions, he said, noting that in winter, his groceries arrive by airplane and are then delivered by horse-drawn dray.

Residents talked about the educational advantage of small classrooms, the services at the medical center, and the community's ability to come together to raise funds, as it did last summer when, in one night, enough money was donated

to purchase a new ambulance.

Jennifer Blosswick, executive director of the Mackinac Island Community Foundation, said the community provides trips for students to places like Washington D.C.

With many positive aspects to life on Mackinac Island, Mr. Hokans noted that tourists, who support the local economy and who make year-around living on the Island possible, are visiting in

fewer numbers. The challenge now facing Island tourism officials is to become better marketers. Mr. Hokans told the news crew. He noted a drop of more than 200,000 tourists in the last seven years, from 960,000 in 1998 to approximately 745,000 last year.

With an infrastructure set up to host one million people a year, he cautioned, "We cannot afford to have another 200,000 people not come next year."

Referring to higher gas prices and a loss of jobs in southeastern Michigan, he said:

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Early Tellefson Camper Donated to Museum

Harold "Skip" Warp (left) of Mackinac Island and Chicago and Tom Tellefson of California pose in St. Ignace next to a unique travel trailer built by Mr. Tellefson's father, Commander E.M. Tellefson, in 1925. The trailer was constructed on Mackinac Island at a time when others who desired traveling shelters simply constructed small hut-like cabins and attached them to flat bed trailers. Mr. Tellefson's rig was ahead of its time, said Mr. Warp. Built with cedar planks covered by canvas, its construction resembles that of a canoe and its shape resembles the famous Airstream trailer design which appeared on the market years later. Mr. Tellefson donated the trailer to the Harold Warp Pioneer Village in Minden, Nebraska, Thursday, September 14.

Runners Cross Mackinac Bridge To Benefit Special Olympics

Eighteen Michigan State Police troopers and hundreds of other runners raised \$75,000 for Special Olympics in the annual 750-mile Torch Run Wednesday, September 13, through Friday, September 15, and State Police divers also participated this year, swimming a relay across the Straits of Mackinac.

Ten divers took turns swimming in the cold water, and State Police diver Jennifer Hodgson of Brighton completed the entire swim on her own. The divers swam from the Mackinac Bridge Authority dock at St. Ignace to Mackinaw City.

Leading the run over the Mackinac Bridge was Eric Morgan, a corrections officer at Chippewa Regional Correctional Facility. Jeff Bidelman, a Manistee corrections officer, handed the ceremonial torch to Mr. Morgan after completing five miles of a segment that stretched from M-134, down Mackinac Trail, and through downtown St. Ignace to the bridge toll booths. The run began at Copper Harbor and ended at Sterling Heights.

Mr. Morgan was accompanied by Joe Kaczynski, 22, of Auburn, who is a participant in the Special Olympics, and state corrections

officers, state police, and members of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, including Chairman Aaron Payment and tribal police officer Jason Marshall.

Mr. Kaczynski, who competed in the 2003 International Special Olympic games in Ireland, was the winner of this year's Torch Run T-shirt design contest, which 50 people entered.

"Special Olympics and Michigan State Police make a great partnership," said John Card, coordinator of the Torch Run and a lieutenant at the Bay City post. He said that the 750-mile relay is the longest non-stop relay in the nation.

The Torch Run is recognized internationally as law enforcement's official cause, said Mr. Card. All funds raised go toward Special Olympics to assist with transportation expenses incurred by the athletes and their families, by purchasing equipment, and paying for athletic training.

Michigan State Police is celebrating its 25th anniversary of the Torch Run this year and holds many other fundraisers for Special Olympics besides the Torch Run to raise between \$300,000 and \$400,000 annually.



Jeff Bidelman, a corrections officer from Manistee, hands off the torch to Eric Morgan, an officer for the state Department of Corrections in Kinross, as he begins the Torch Run over the Mackinac Bridge Wednesday, September 13. The run began in Copper Harbor and ended in Detroit Friday, September 15. Mr. Bidelman ran from Mackinac Trail to the bridge toll booth.

Simmons Leaves Visitors Bureau Director Position

Kelly Simmons has resigned her position as the director of the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau to take a job as director of marketing and sales for Baymont Inn and Suites in Mackinaw City. She announced her resignation to the Visitors Bureau board Tuesday, September 12, and will continue working at the bureau through Friday, September 22.

Mrs. Simmons has worked for the Visitors Bureau for six years.

"I've had a great time here, but it is time for someone else to take the helm," she told *The St. Ignace News*. Made up of motel owners and funded by a two percent motel room tax, the Visitors Bureau's goal is to market and promote St. Ignace to increase motel room revenue by making potential visitors aware of St. Ignace as a travel destination.

The bureau is staffed by two part-time employees, Deb Durm and Beth Krasniuk, in addition to the director. Ms. Durm will direct the office on an interim basis.

"I'm looking forward to my new adventure," Mrs. Simmons said. "New adventures are always good." She said the new position will give her more time to spend with her husband, Grant, and two sons, Grant, 13, and Parker, 11.



At left: Several Michigan State Police troopers and other law enforcement officials participated in the annual 750-mile torch run Wednesday, September 13, to raise money for Special Olympics. One of runners crossing the Mackinac Bridge was Joe Kaczynski, 22, of Auburn, who is a Special Olympics athlete and the artist of this year's Torch Run T-shirt. Those who ran the bridge leg include (front, from left) Aaron Payment, chairman of Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Eric Morgan, officer for the Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) in Kinross, Mr. Kaczynski, Marianne Hungsinger, a DOC officer from Grand Rapids, Laura Huttenlocker, a retired DOC officer from Jackson, Jason Marshall, a Sault Ste. Marie Tribe officer; (back) Carl White, DOC officer from Coldwater, Nick Smith, a DOC officer from Jackson, and Russ Cilibrise, a DOC officer from Lansing.

Apple Day Planned at DeTour Sat.

By Amy Polk

The Third Annual Happy Apple Saturday in DeTour Village Saturday, September 23, will celebrate harvest time in northern Michigan with apple-based activities at participating businesses from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The festival will be centered on Ontario Street, which is the main street through DeTour Village.

Activities will start at 10 a.m. with an outdoor market of artists and vendors at Dockside Cafe, and each participating business will have a basket of free apples at its front door.

The event is organized by the Blinker Light Association of Businesses (BLAB), said Dockside owner Annalee Buschbacher.

Live music throughout the day will culminate in an 8 p.m. performance at the Village Inn by Fast Eddie's Blues Band of Marquette.

An apple pie baking contest will take place at noon at the Dockside Cafe. Anyone who wants to enter the contest must bring their pie to the restaurant by 11 a.m. A gift basket and gift certificates will be awarded as prizes.

A new event this year will be an apple pie eating contest at 1 p.m., hosted by the Village Inn. Contestants must pay a \$2 entry fee, which will be used to offset the cost of Happy Apple Saturday. Anticipating a big turnout, organizers are offering early registration at The Garage throughout the week.

The Garage coffee house will again offer free samples of freshly pressed cider, made with an old fashioned apple cider press. Cider will be available all day at The Garage.

The Reverend Judy Arnold of DeTour Union Presbyterian Church, a master storyteller, will tell stories for children on the porch of North Country Sports.

The DeTour Homemakers will make elephant ears outside the Dockside Restaurant, and a bake sale will be offered at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

Other anticipated, but unscheduled, activities include an antique sale, freshly made caramel and baked apples, sidewalk chalk art for children, and watercolor painting classes in front of River Threads.

A 50/50 cash raffle and a raffle for an original painting will be drawn at 8 p.m. at the Village Inn. The apple-theme painting was created by artist Renee Norton of DeTour.

Other participating businesses include DeTour-Drummond Building Center, Fisher's Restaurant, Huron Street Inn Bed and Breakfast, the Pilot House, Shell Station, and Sune's Food Center.

DeTour Beautification Committee is asking everyone to decorate their homes or businesses for fall, and are especially encouraging people to make scarecrows. If anyone wants a scarecrow frame, they are available at The Garage. Beautification Committee members also plan to place autumn decorations around the village before the event.

In the case of rain, activities will be moved to the DeTour Chamber of Commerce pavilion near DeTour Area Schools.

For more information, call Annalee Buschbacher at (906) 297-5165.