

Minnesota Resorter

Resorters Helping Resorters



Spring 2010 Vol. 26 No. 2



Education
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A PUBLICATION OF THE CONGRESS OF MINNESOTA RESORTS

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Minnesota Resorter

Resorters Helping Resorters



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About the cover:

Transitioning into Spring at Crow Wing Crest Lodge. Photography by Kim Bowen

The Minnesota Resorter is a quarterly publication of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts. The opinions expressed in the articles printed here-in are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions nor the official position of the CMR nor any of its officers, directors, or members. Please address any comments or inquires to the committee contact. The Minnesota Resorter is printed by Arrow Printing.

From Your President's Pen



President Ed Fussy
Congress of Minnesota Resorts

Hello Resorters:

I don't know about you, but to me it seems like winter has flown by! I guess it's because I don't have all my winter projects finished yet and it's time to start my spring projects!

In January, I attended the Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference. The theme this year was "Achieving Success in the 'New Normal'". There was a lot of

good information presented and I gained some new ideas.

The CMR had its annual Day on the Hill in February. I would like to thank everyone that made it a priority to attend. I can't tell you enough how important it is. Thank you to the CMR's Legislative Committee for all the time and thought put into the Day on the Hill. Thanks also to Joel Carlson, our lobbyist, for helping and coaching us, to Tami LeFavor, Joel's assistant, who gets everything set up and organized for us, and to Terry Duhn, who gets us there and back, safe

and sound. Plus he helps out with some of our meetings. It continues to be a fun couple days, and it's very important in helping keep our businesses viable. If you have never attended (and I know a lot of you have not!), I encourage you to try it at least once. Make it your 2011 resolution!

I hope you took the day off from your spring projects and attended the Spring Workshop that was held March 30 at Timber Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids. It's always a good way to broaden your knowledge and to get fired up for the upcoming season!

Each of us has our own unique way of running our resorts. But we all have one thing in common...we own and operate a Minnesota Resort. I don't consider my fellow resorters as my competition, as I feel that we each have something different to offer our customers. That is why I am proud to be a member of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts. This organization is all about "resorters helping resorters" from the Fall Conference to the School of Resorting to a small group representing everyone down at the Capitol! If you are not a member, I encourage you to join. This is an all volunteer organization that is dedicated to helping resorters.

To keep updated on things going on, look for the monthly membership newsletter.

Hope your upcoming season is looking great!

Ed Fussy

The 2010 Day on the Hill was a great success!



Governor Pawlenty takes time to pose for a photo after meeting with the Congress of Minnesota Resorts 2010 Day on the Hill attendees to discuss resort concerns.



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EDUCATION

Four Mistakes You Might Be Making in Your Gift Shop

By Rick Garland, Midwest Reflections (midwestreflections.com)



As a resort owner and operator, you are pulled in many different directions. Your gift shop and souvenirs are just one aspect of your business. As a Minnesota based souvenirs and gift distributor for the Midwest for the past 10 years, Midwest Reflections understands the economic and time constraints of your business. We would like to point out four mistakes you might be making in your gift shop. These mistakes might be limiting the profits you could be making. By suggesting ways to correct those mistakes, Midwest Reflections hopes you can increase your profits.

Mistake #1: Never making it to the reorder

You finally find time to sit down and look at the catalog. You pick out items that you can envision your guests purchasing for themselves and as gifts. You send in the order, receive the order, unpack the merchandise, price it, and display it. You ring it up and bag it, and finally, deposit your profit. But what about the reorder? This is the daily scene in most gift shops, but in retail the name of the game is turning inventory. If you don't reorder, you are missing out on additional profits. If you reorder items on a regular basis, you could be turning a greater profit for your shop. Each resort is going to have a different ordering schedule.

Mistake #2: Not selecting items for "free" advertising

Advertising is key to the success of your business. When people are choosing a vacation getaway, they want to know if it is going to be worth the money and time away from work and the day to day grind. When making this decision, customers rely heavily on word of mouth. Making sure your guests have a good time insures that they will do some marketing for you. It is also important to have custom items available in your gift shop. These items are not only one of a kind mementos of a wonderful vacation, but also great conversation starters for the word of mouth recommendations you



need. Don't pay for all your advertising. Let your customers do it for you.

Mistake #3: You haven't bought into buying locally

It is an emerging trend that people are looking for locally produced and quality products. If you vacation frequently or regularly visit gift shops, you will notice the same items in all of the shops. Most of these frequently seen items are imported. Customers are looking for unique items that are made locally.

Mistake #4: When the weather turns cold, your orders "freeze"

Most businesses have slow seasons. In the Midwest, the winter is generally slower than the summer. Your business may decline; worry and nerves get the best of you. But you can't freeze your gift shop orders. Even when the weather turns cold, shopping is still in season. Don't stop ordering at the end of your busy season. Keep your gift shop stocked so that it doesn't look bare and "closed for the season." You might not need as many of each item, but don't limit your selection. You can't sell from an empty basket.

Consider how your gift shop vendors can assist you in avoiding these gift shop mistakes. Their services may offer regular follow-up calls, return policies, customized and personalized items, as well as locally made and decorated items, and no minimum ordering requirements or set up fees. They can partner with you in creating a successful gift shop.



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CMR School of Resorting Intro to Log Furniture Making

By Jason and Timberly Christiansen, Finn'n Feather Resort

Are you aware of what's going on around you? Did you miss this wonderful opportunity? The School of Resorting held an "Intro to Log Furniture Making" class on Thursday, January 21. Over 15 people attended and made the most of this opportunity by walking out of class with their own handcrafted end tables.

The day began promptly at 9:00am with a viewing of the instructor Duane Shoup's house and his vast display of talents. Everything from cutting boards, tables, rocking chairs and outdoor furniture was on display. After getting inspired by all these works of art, the class went to work on their own creations. They gathered in Duane's shop and picked out their own log table tops from a large unique selection of wood, ranging from Ash, Birch, Cherry and Maple. The shop was filled with all the necessary tools most people dream of having to quickly whip out a project like this. The rules were: no blood on the equipment (safety first), the group will accomplish a task before moving on to the next, ask any questions anytime, and grab any wood that fulfills your imagination. The class had a very relaxed atmosphere and the participants were given step-by-step instructions on two different tables. The complete assembly of these two tables was demonstrated by Duane, so everyone would have the freedom to make their own unique table. Some of the participants had worked with wood on their own and completed the tasks early. They continued to help the others

move forward which was most helpful and appreciated. What is the CMR motto?

Duane commented on how different all the tables ended up, and he loved it! Lunch was served with a side of sawdust, and, yes, even with the location so far in the woods, the food was there. Duane fit in well with the resorters, being a jack of all trades kind of guy and many stories of his interesting past.

In the end, everyone walked away with confidence to begin making their own log creations and a wonderful piece of furniture to show off!

A huge "Thank You"
goes to Duane for opening up his house and shop to fifteen strangers to share his vast knowledge, excitement, and enthusiasm for teaching others about the process of making log furniture.

Be sure to keep your eyes open so you can take advantage of the next School of Resorting class!



Some of the many participants in the Log Furniture School of Resorting class. From left to right: Laura, Samantha and Tyler Nupson , Oak Point Resort, Troy Loren, Little Boy Resort, Dana Pitt, Bailey's Resort, Dave Thompson, Fisherman's Village Resort, Instructor Duane Shoup, Craig Riendeau, Thunder Lake Lodge, Ed Becker, In-We-Go Resort, George Mohs and Cheryl Dockter, Morning Star Resort and Jim Eickhorst, Kohl's Resort.

EDUCATION

Flood Insurance – What We Need to Know

By Anne Mullen, Mullen Insurance Agency (mulleninsagency.com)

With the weathermen all discussing the probability of floods again this year, I thought it might be timely to offer a quick review of flood insurance. There are many misconceptions regarding this coverage.

Floods and flash floods happen in all 50 states. Everyone lives in a flood zone, and most homeowner's insurance policies don't cover flood insurance. If you live in a Special Flood Hazard Area, your mortgage lender requires you to have flood insurance.



Did you know?

- Just an inch of water could cause costly damage to your property.
- Hurricanes, winter storms, and snow melt are common causes of flooding.
- Federal disaster assistance is usually a loan that must be paid back with interest.
- You are eligible to purchase flood insurance as long as your community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- A policy must be in effect **30 days** before there is coverage.
- Claims and expenses are funded by insurance premiums, not tax dollars.
- Flooding causes over \$2 billion per year of property damage in the U.S.
- 25 percent of flood losses occur in moderate- to low-risk flood zones.

When you have a flood insurance policy:

- Flood insurance compensates you for all covered losses.
- Coverage is relatively inexpensive.
- You will be reimbursed even if there is not a federal disaster declaration.
- You don't have to repay a loan; covered losses are paid in full.
- NFIP insurance is backed by the federal government.

What types of buildings are eligible?

Structures with two or more outside rigid walls and a fully secured roof attached to a permanent location and also...

- Manufactured or mobile homes along with travel trailers as long as they are affixed to a permanent location
- Detached garages as long as they are not used for business or farming purposes
- Silos and grain storage buildings and cisterns
- Boathouses partially over water...under certain circumstances
- Structures must resist flotation, collapse and sideways motion.

Some buildings are ineligible:

- Container type structures such as gas and liquid tanks
- Buildings entirely over water if constructed or substantially improved since 10/1/1982
- Boat repair docks
- Greenhouses, unless they have at least two rigid walls and a roof

By definition, a flood means a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more acres of normally dry land or of TWO OR MORE properties (at least one of which is your property) from...

- Overflow of inland or tidal waters
- Unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source
- Mudflow
- Collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or similar body of water as a result of erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water exceeding anticipated cyclical levels that result in a flood as defined above.

There are limitations on property in basements or enclosures:

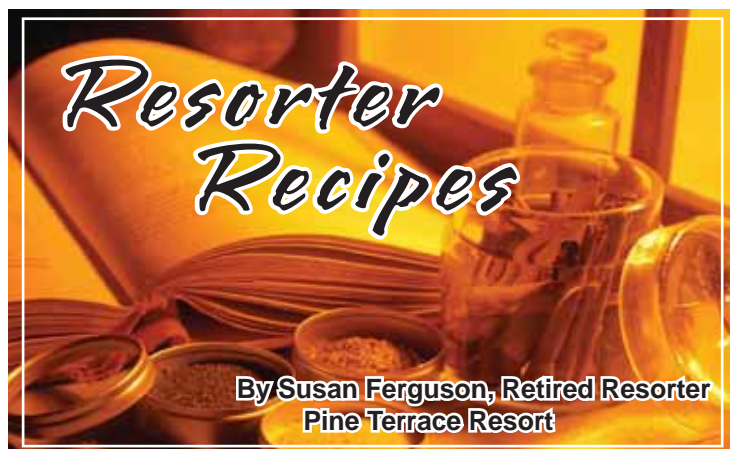
Coverage only applies to specified types of property. The items must be necessary for operation of the structure such as central air conditioners, drywall for walls and ceilings in basement, electrical junction and circuit breaker boxes, outlets and switches, fuel tanks and fuel in them, furnaces and water heaters, heat pumps, sump pumps, water softeners and well water tanks and pumps. There is also coverage for air conditioning units, washers and dryers, and food freezers as long as they are installed in their functioning locations and connected to a power source.



There are also several other coverages provided, including:

- Debris removal expenses – also covers removing neighbor's debris from insured property
- Expenses of removing property to safety – up to \$1000
- Sandbagging expenses-up to \$1000 of coverage if property clearly threatened by flood and there has been an evacuation order issued
- Pollution coverage – up to \$10,000 for damage to covered property if caused by flooding
- Increased cost of compliance – up to \$30,000 for increased costs resulting from floodplain management ordinances or law requiring elevation, relocation, or demolition after direct loss by flood

Ask your agent questions if you have concerns regarding what may or may not be covered under your current insurance policy. It is in your best interest to determine the answers before a flood occurs.



Creamy Wild Rice Soup
 6 T margarine or butter
 1 T minced onion
 1/2 C flour
 3 C chicken broth
 1 can cooked wild rice, drained
 1/2 C finely chopped carrots
 1/3 C cubed ham
 3 T slivered almonds
 1 C half and half
 2 T dry sherry wine (optional)



Melt margarine or butter in saucepan; sauté onion until tender. Blend in flour; gradually add broth. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil; boil 1 minute. Stir in rice, carrots, ham, almonds and salt (to taste); simmer about 5 minutes. Blend in half and half. Heat through.

Fresh Garden Salsa
 6-8 Roma tomatoes (diced up) I have used all kinds of tomatoes, and it works just the same.
 1 can of corn (whole kernel)
 1 jalapeno diced up without the seeds (more if you like it hot)
 1 C of cilantro (chopped up)
 1 C of red onion (you can also use scallions)
 The juice from 2 limes
 Mix it all together and enjoy! It tastes even better if you let it sit overnight in the refrigerator.

Curried Chicken with Cabbage, Apple, and Onion
 1 tsp curry powder
 1/4 tsp
 1/4 tsp black pepper
 4 small skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
 2 tsp olive oil
 2 tsp butter
 1 medium onion, sliced and separated into rings
 3 C shredded cabbage
 2 red-skin cooking apples, such as Rome or Jonathan, cored and thinly sliced
 1/2 C apple juice (such as Simply Taste)

A great summer meal idea: marinade chicken breasts in lime juice and olive oil. Grill the chicken and top with the above salsa before serving.

In a small bowl, combine 1/2 tsp of the curry powder, salt and black pepper. Sprinkle mixture over chicken; rub in with your fingers.

Blueberry Bread
 Beat 2 eggs
 Add: 1 1/4 cup sugar
 1 C milk
 5 T melted butter
 3 C flour
 4 tsp baking powder
 1 tsp salt
 Mix until blended
 Add: 1 C nuts (optional)
 Fold in 1 carton frozen blueberries. DO NOT DEFROST THEM. KEEP THEM FROZEN

In a large non-stick skillet, heat oil over medium high heat. Add chicken. Cook 8-12 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink, turning once. Transfer chicken to a platter; cover to keep warm.

Bake at 350 degrees for 50 – 60 minutes - makes 2 bread pan loaves

Melt butter in the hot skillet. Add onion. Cook about 5 minutes or until onion is tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in cabbage, apples and apple juice. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 tsp curry powder. Cook 3-4 minutes or just until apples and vegetables are tender.

To serve, put a chicken breast on a plate and top with the cabbage, apples and onion.



**HAVE A RECIPE
 YOU'D LOVE TO SHARE?**

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EDUCATION

9 Ways to Save on Merchant Processing Fees

By Ted Burrington, Approval Payment Solutions (apsolutions.net)



We all know that the cost of running a small to medium size resort, lodge or bed and breakfast has increased over the past several years. Below I've listed several ways you can lower the cost of accepting credit cards and, at the same time, increase your profit margin.

Lowering the rate you pay for processing credit cards just ISN'T ENOUGH.

By implementing the following suggestions, you may lower your overall transaction costs by as much as 45%.

1. Debit and check card transactions are on the rise. Since 2006, the use of debit cards has increased by 35%. If you're processing debit and check cards without using a PIN pad, your transaction costs are considerably higher. Example: \$50,000 in debit transactions. WITHOUT a PIN pad, your costs would be \$1012.50. Using a PIN pad, your costs would be \$527.00. Almost a 50% savings annually.
2. 'Card Not Present' (CNP) procedures. By following the proper CNP procedures, you can lower your 'key entered' costs by as much as .85%.
3. 'Merchant Category Code' (MCC). Check to make sure your MCC is correct. If the MCC code is incorrect, you could be paying a higher fee.
4. Enter all the Address Verification Prompts (AVS). Retail and lodging regulations require complete AVS and CVV (Card Verification Value) codes, not just the zip code. Average cost for NOT completing AVS prompts is an additional .85%.
5. Batch on time. Are you sending settlements (Batch) within 24-hours? Make sure to perform settlements daily. Average savings is .95%.
6. Process checks electronically. Eliminate a run to the bank to make check deposits by implementing 'echeck'. By processing your checks electronically, you not only save a trip to town, but echecks are processed in real time, meaning check deposits are ACH'd to your account faster. For a nominal fee of 35 cents, you can process electronic checks by

mail, phone or in person.

7. Compliant terminals. We've all read or been told that in 2009 Visa/MC released a list of credit card terminals that would no longer be supported. Skimming, fraud and hacking is on the rise. Avoid being penalized; check with your merchant service provider for a complete list of 'non-compliant' terminals. The new line of credit card terminals can be encrypted to prevent someone from stealing your customer's card information. Ask for Hypersafe32 when ordering a new terminal, and be assured that your customer card information is secure.

8. Take reservation payments through your website. A virtual terminal allows your guests to pay their reservations through a link on your website when they are unable to reach you by phone. No more missed reservation payments!

9. Use the new Global Lodging terminal application. Introduced February 2010, this new application is designed with the small to medium size resort, lodge or bed and breakfast properties in mind. The Global Lodging application provides traditional front desk check-in/check-out functionality, as well as a Quick Stay option allowing you to simply charge the customer's card with a single transaction. This new lodging application has improved reporting capabilities and is easy to use – and for the first time you can take advantage of lower retail and lodging Visa/MC rates all in one terminal.

If you follow these 9 ways to save, you will decrease the cost of accepting credit cards. To learn more on how to reduce your processing costs, contact your merchant service provider and request a review.



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Ideas for Your Welcome Book

Phones in Church

A man in Topeka, Kansas decided to write a book about churches around the country. He started by flying to San Francisco and started working east from there.

Going to a very large church, he began taking photographs and making notes.

He spotted a golden telephone on the vestibule wall and was intrigued with a sign, which read "Calls: \$10,000 a minute."

Seeking out the pastor he asked about the phone and the sign. The pastor answered that this golden phone is, in fact, a direct line to heaven and if he pays the price he can talk directly to GOD.

The man thanked the pastor and continued on his way. As he continued to visit churches in Seattle, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, Oklahoma City, and around the United States, he found more phones, with the same sign, and the same answer from each pastor.

Finally, he arrived in Minnesota. Upon entering a church in Grand Marais, behold - he saw the usual golden telephone. But THIS time, the sign read "Calls: 35 cents."

Fascinated, he asked to talk to the pastor, "Reverend, I have been in cities & towns all across the country and in each church I have found this golden telephone and have been told it is a direct line to Heaven and that I could talk to GOD, but in the other churches the cost was \$10,000 a minute. Your sign reads only 35 cents a call.

Why?"

I love this part...We love Minnesota ...

The pastor, smiling benignly, replied, "Son, you're in Minnesota now ... You're in God's Country, It's a local call."

American by Birth - A Minnesotan by the Grace of God.

Minnesota has One recreational boat Six per every people.

The word Minnesota comes from a Dakota word (*Mnisota*) for "sky-tinted water."

The land of 10,000 lakes is no exaggeration- there are 11,842 lakes over 10 acres in size in Minnesota.

Did You Know? Quae sursum volo videre (translation: "I wish to see what is above") was the intended motto for the territorial seal, chosen by Henry Sibley in 1849. When it was engraved, however, it became Quo sursum velo videre (translation: unintelligible Latin, but something like "I cover to see what is above"). The 1849 motto was not coded in Minnesota law.

State Symbol Quiz - How well do you know Minnesota? (Fill in the blank)

- THE MINNESOTA STATE BIRD IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE BUTTERFLY IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE DRINK IS _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE FISH IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE FLOWER IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE FRUIT IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE GEMSTONE IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE GRAIN IS _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE MOTTO IS _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE MUFFIN IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE MUSHROOM IS THE _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE SPORT IS _____.
- THE MINNESOTA STATE TREE IS _____.

ANSWER KEY

- BIRD - Loon
- BUTTERFLY - Monarch
- DRINK - Milk
- FISH - Walleye
- FLOWER - Pink & White Lady Slipper (or Showy Lady Slipper)
- FRUIT - Honeycrisp Apple
- GEMSTONE - Lake Superior agate
- GRAIN - Wild Rice
- MOTTO - L'etoile du Nord (translation: "Star of the North")
- MUFFIN - Blueberry
- MUSHROOM - Morel
- SPORT - Ice Hockey
- TREE - Norway (or Red) Pine

THE CONGRESS OF MINNESOTA RESORTS



What the CMR Can Do for You!



MARKETING



Your resort is listed on our website www.Minnesota-Resorts.com.



Our site is professionally marketed through links, banners and extensive search engine optimization.

LEGISLATION



Full-time lobbyist working for the interests of RESORTS ONLY!



Day on the Hill- Make your voice heard in St. Paul.



Stay informed on legislative issues that affect our industry.



EDUCATION



Fall Conferences and Spring Workshops - informative sessions and networking with other resorters.



School of Resorting educational classes.



Yahoo Groups - online resort chat room.



Members only online resources on our website.

PLUS- Vendor Discounts to CMR Members • Educational Scholarships • “Resorters of the Year” Award • And Much More!

Resorters Helping Resorters - Since 1985

*None of us is as smart
as all of us.*

Be it successes or trials -
We've been there and
done that and want to
share it with you.

The Congress of
Minnesota Resorts exists
to help family owned
and operated resorts in
Minnesota to continue as
a viable segment of the
Minnesota tourism
industry.

Day on the Hill 2010

*"I encourage you to get on the
bus next year and meet your
state legislators; we need them
to know we do exist, as the
press keeps telling them we
are disappearing. Come along
and show them we are here to
stay."*

*Tim Aarsvold
Geneva Beach Resort*

JOIN THE CMR - YOUR MEMBERSHIP COUNTS

Your membership in the Congress of Minnesota Resorts (CMR) is a good investment for both you and your resort business. Join in the organization's philosophy of "Resorters Helping Resorters." So many benefits await you! Fill out the membership application today and become a member of a unique association of resorters, run by resorters, for resorters. Our focus is very clear!

Resort Name _____ Lake _____

Owner/Manager _____ Years in resorting _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Township _____ County _____

Phone _____ No. of rental units _____ No. of bedrooms _____

Resort E-mail Address _____ Resort Website Address _____

Membership investment is only \$15.15 per bedroom (Min. \$151.50 for 10 bedrooms or fewer, max. \$802.95 for 53 bedrooms and up.) Membership rates good through Aug. 31, 2010.

Associate Memberships - Dues \$151.50 For vendors and for those with an interest in resorting but not owning a resort.

Amount of check enclosed _____ Please Circle.....New.....Renewal



Send to: Congress of Minnesota Resorts
21403 52nd Street NE
New London, MN 56273

Questions regarding Membership?
Contact Vicky at CMR@Minnesota-Resorts.com or 888-761-4245

MARKETING

Mille Lac's Newest Century Old Resort

By Margie Landis, Hunter Winfield's Resort



Nestled in Isle Bay on the southeast shore of scenic Lake Mille Lacs, minutes from the 314-acre Father Hennepin State Park and just two hours away from the bustle of the Twin Cities, lies one of Minnesota's newest century old resorts: the historic Hunter Winfield's Resort.

Founded over a century ago and much beloved by the hardy walleye fisherman of yesteryear, Hunter Winfield's Resort first opened its doors under the moniker of Carlson's. Visitors flocked to the picturesque cabins that clustered along the lakefront property, and when new ownership resulted in a name change to the Severson Resort in the 1940s, the hidden getaway remained as popular as ever.



Margie, Claire and Mike Christensen

For much of the past 20 years, however, the quiet little enclave by the lake remained silent and mostly forgotten, its cabin doors shut to all but a few private lodgers. With a love for the land and a dream to recapture the property's venerable history, Jason Hunter and Margie Landis purchased the old Severson place in 2006 and christened it Hunter Winfield's Resort.

The proud new owners dove immediately into renovations and new construction, restoring the original old Carlson-era cabins to like-

new condition and building a new store-front office stocked with traveler's supplies and sundries. New ice fishing wheel houses, permanent 200-foot docks, a renovated boat landing, a gas pump at the dock, and a new tavern named for the resort's mascot squirrel Freddy add charm and comfort to a setting already imbued with abundant natural beauty.

Jason was in a fatal accident later in 2006, shortly after the renovations began. Margie, originally from the Twin Cities, decided to stay and continue to work on the dream they shared. In early 2008, Margie married a local professional walleye guide, Mike Christensen, and in late 2008, Margie and Mike welcomed a daughter, Claire Anne Christensen to the family.

The resort has continued to flourish over the past few years with constant additions and expansions. Another new cabin is in the works and due to open in May, 2010. The resort mission is to continue to meet and exceed customer expectations.



TELL YOUR RESORT STORY IN OUR MAGAZINE

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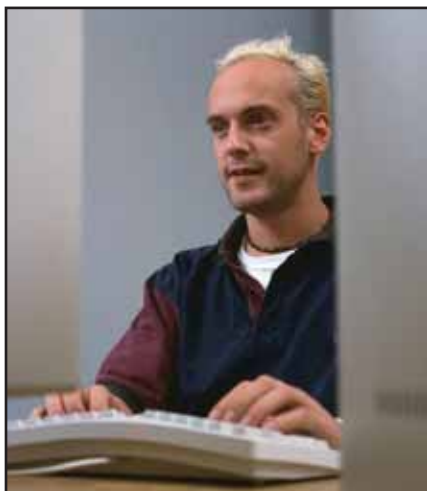
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the resort sales experts.

Social Media Revisited

Jeff's Thoughts - February 3, 2010 (jeffjudy.com)

Reprinted with permission from Jeff Judy & Associates



If you have even a passing interest in marketing matters, in the strategies businesses of all kinds, including banks, apply to gain the attention of potential prospects and customers, you are probably hearing, and reading, about so-called "social media" or "social networking sites." You are sure to have come across Facebook and Twitter, the most popular examples of these tools. You have probably read an article somewhere, or perhaps even heard a speaker

or workshop leader, suggesting that if your institution isn't using these tools to reach new audiences, you may have already missed the boat.

Now, if your question is, "Should we be using social networking as part of our marketing strategy?" I agree that that's a good question to ask. But do not confuse that with a very different question -- one that I actually hear more banks and businesses asking -- "Why aren't we using these social media, like other businesses?"

Certainly, Facebook, Twitter, and similar tools have proven useful in individual cases. Some businesses have taken advantage of them to achieve excellent results.

But the truth is, the body of data, the amount of information we have to evaluate these tools, is pretty small. The real reason that you are hearing so much about social networking is not its proven value across many businesses, but rather, more simply, because they are the latest thing. There is a lot of "buzz" around these tools, and they get a lot of attention from writers and speakers whose job it is to highlight the latest thing, and whose technological leanings make them want to find these tools useful.

In one way, social media are easy to use. Anyone can quickly master the simple steps required to post information or send out announcements.

But in another way, these tools are very challenging. What few people talk about is that these tools are only effective when they deliver a lot of content, very frequently updated. That means that the kind of person you need to implement an effective Facebook or Twitter strategy is not a "techie" but a writer, someone who can write concisely, powerfully, and above all, often. Can you generate a minimum of several new messages a week, compact content that carries a lot of impact that easily grabs the attention of your prospects and customers?

When you start with the "why aren't we using this" question, you are really just following the competition. I have written before about the problems that come with that approach. If you just match your rivals, instead of determining what uniquely suits your special strengths, challenges, and target markets, you can end up letting the weakest player in your market set your pricing. If you just copy the policies and strategies of other institutions, you can never beat their performance, and you will often not even match what they are able to do.

So why let them drive your marketing strategy, as well, especially when it is easy to underestimate the effort it will require? Stick with the first question, "Should WE be using social networking?", a question that focuses on YOUR needs and resources. Take the time to figure out what will really be required before jumping in.

The "social media boat" definitely has not sailed yet. It will be a useful tool in some hands, and an enormous distraction in others. You have to work out whether social networking is a fit for you on your own terms.

This is a decision to be made by your management, after some careful deliberation, and not by technological enthusiasts, marketing faddists, or your competition.

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**Welcome to our
New Members!**

Celeste Colson, Paul & Karen Colson,
 Jake's Northwest Angle, Angle Inlet

Mike McNabb,
 Crystal Lida Resort, Pelican Rapids

Mike & Margie Christensen,
 Hunter Winfield's Resort, Isle

Roger B. Reynolds,
 Rainbow Bay Resort, Lake Shore

Scott & Sue Springer,
 Pike Point Resort, Tenstrike

Steve & Nancy Roth,
 Loon Point Resort, Big Fork,

None of us are as smart as all of us.
 Thank you for joining the
 Congress of Minnesota Resorts
 and sharing your knowledge!

Welcome

MARKETING

Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference

By Tim Aarsvold, Geneva Beach Resort

**Grandparents
are
vacationing
with
grandkids,
and the
grandkids are
driving the
decisions.**

**Do you have
a presence on
Facebook
and
Twitter?**

The Congress of Minnesota Resorts was represented by four board members and two resort owners at the Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference. There were also some CMR members in attendance that represented other organizations. It was a great conference at Cragun's Resort. There were many sessions that explained what today's tourists are planning and what we should be doing to meet their needs. The main ideas that I will keep in mind as I prepare for the 2010 summer season are:

- Families are looking for vacation "experiences."
- We need to help families by being travel/vacation planners.
- What experiences can we offer at our resorts and in our communities while they are vacationing?

• Grandparents are vacationing with grandkids, and the grandkids are driving the decisions. Do we have a presence on Facebook and Twitter?

Much of the conference had to do with the need to get connected through the social media networks. Our guests are very informed and have access to information instantly with today's technology. The search engines are changing what they look for on your websites. Meta tags are on the way out, and the social media connections are taking priority.

DID YOU KNOW?

- MN tourism is an \$11.2 billion business.
- MN travelers spend \$33 million per day.
- MN tourism produces 16% of MN sales tax dollars.
- We employ 245,788 people, which is 10% of the private sector employment.
- Of the 39 million MN travelers, 1.6 million are resort visitors and 2.5 million are campground visitors. Are you reaching them?

Tourism is very visible at the State Capitol. This will be a very important year to watch and voice our concerns to our senators and representatives and to protect our interests.

Promotion of our tourism industry is constantly changing, and I appreciate the work that Explore Minnesota does to keep us informed. A simple way to catch the eye of a potential guest is to take the time to update your information on the CMR and Explore Minnesota websites. These websites produce results, so it is important that every business keeps their website content up-to-date.



Bob & Jennifer Bateman with Ed Fussy.

Bob & Jennifer Bateman were recognized as the Congress of Minnesota Resorts, Resorters of the Year at the Explore Minnesota Conference on Tourism which was held January 26-27, 2010 at Cragun's Resort near Brainerd.



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Aitkin, MN 56431
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CMR Website Update

By Tim Aarsvold, Geneva Beach Resort

If you were looking for a resort vacation, would your resort information entice you to make a reservation?

We encourage you to TEST your resort listing. Changes have been made to the CMR website. Please take a couple of minutes to look at your information and make any updates necessary. With the new amenities list and with our continued marketing campaign, we ask that you check to be sure your resort information is correct.

To edit your individual resort listing:

- Go to www.Minnesota-Resorts.com
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the “**CMR MEMBERSHIP**” link.
- Enter your login information.
Login: Your email address
Password: Only you know
- At the top of the page, click on “**Edit Amenities**”, make your selections, click on “**SAVE PROFILE**”, click on “**Back to Main Editing Page**”. Remember to click “**SAVE PROFILE**” on the main page also.
- “**Nearby Cities**” use towns around you not in your address. This search looks at groups of letters. (do not use spaces or commas)
- Add your descriptions. The short description is your first impression; the longer description is your sales pitch. Make the changes necessary.
- To add a photo or logo to your listing:
Select “**BROWSE**”
Select a photo or logo from your picture file on your computer.
- “**Resort Region(s)**” You may select up to two regions for searches.
- Click on “**SAVE PROFILE**”. Your changes will be seen when you log out and navigate to the page or log back in.

Your login is always your email address. No one can see your password. If you have forgotten your Password click on “**I forgot my login!**” and follow the instructions.

For further help, please contact Tim Aarsvold at
TJA@GenevaBeachResort.com or 320.763.3200.

Please add the Congress of Minnesota Resorts logo and link to your website.

Follow the instructions in the “Media” section on the CMR website.

This additional link helps with search engine recognition.

Submit Your Nominations for Resorters of the Year

Congress of Minnesota Resorts Members,

The Resorters of the Year Award is given annually to a resort that exemplifies the spirit and goals of the CMR. The criteria centers around the operation of a successful and progressive business, service to the tourism industry both at the local and state levels, and community service in other areas. Mentoring and helping other resort owners and membership in the CMR are also part of the requirements. Nominations for the award are generated entirely by CMR members, and the whole program is dependent upon the time and effort you give in order to recognize excellence. We encourage you to participate through nominations of resorters you feel uphold the highest standards and are dedicated to service within our industry.

Here are the guidelines:

The Congress of Minnesota Resorts selects, through nomination by its members, one resort and resorter(s) that have shown a dedication to the improvement of the Minnesota resort industry by adopting and carrying out business policies and practices that reflect a personal pride in the industry as a whole. They also live up to the organization’s motto of “Resorters Helping Resorters” by involvement in community activities and by displaying a willingness to help other resort owners to successfully operate Minnesota resorts.

To this end, any member of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts can submit a nomination for this prestigious award. Nominations must be received by August 1 each year. The nominating member is not required to verify the eligibility criteria. In the event none of the resorts nominated meet all the eligibility requirements, the Awards Committee will make a selection based on the resort most closely meeting the criteria and notify the winner. The winner will be asked to be present at the annual Congress of Minnesota Resorts Fall Conference where the formal announcement and presentation will be made.

The following criteria are considered by the Awards Committee in making their selection:

- CMR member in good standing for the previous three consecutive years under the same ownership.
- Ability to maintain a successful and progressive resort.
- History of helping and mentoring other resort owners/operators.
- Involvement in community activities.
- At least five years between awards.
- Not a current member of the Awards Committee.

NOMINATION DEADLINE IS AUGUST 1ST

Send nomination form to:

Resorters of the Year Nomination Committee
Congress of Minnesota Resorts
21403 52nd Street NE
New London, MN 56273

New Ways To Drive Visitors To Your Website

By Kathy Moore, Moore Consulting (KnowMoore.com)



Every resort today has a website. You add photos, try to keep the content updated and hope your site appears at the top of every potential traveler's Google search. But what else can you do?

Websites, like cabins, need to evolve with the times. Just as you upgrade features or materials in your lodging units, so too should you upgrade your website if your goal is to attract new eyes to your website.

Industry leaders say that websites should be updated every 3-5 years. This may not mean a complete re-launch of your website, but it could. "Websites are the most effective branding tool available to resorts today," said Bob Sherman, owner of Midwest Captions, a Brainerd-based web development company. "The return on investment for website updates that accurately reflect your property and engage your visitors is invaluable."

In addition to new graphics or page layouts, there are always new features you can add to your website.

Videos, or moving pictures, add a sense of excitement to any website. The positives of sound and movement are tremendous in setting mood and evoking emotion.

In my consulting business, we advise resorts to begin by asking guests to post their vacation videos to YouTube. Resorters can then embed a link on their own websites. This tactic is a very low cost way to get video of your property up on your site.

Of course, professionally produced video content is another option. A key with this, though, is to keep web videos short and to the point. The attention span of web surfers is very short. Having a few quick clips of one minute or less is better than one long video that highlights every feature of your property. If you are hiring someone to produce videos for your website, be sure they understand your target audience.

Once most videos have been created, they can also be uploaded to YouTube and other online sharing sites, generating even more exposure and awareness for your resort. This is especially important if your target audience is under the age of 40.

Added Value Items are elements that make your website more

useful to the traveler. This could involve a link to Google or Yahoo maps for specific driving directions from the traveler's home, to offering a specials page on your website with downloadable coupons for neighborhood businesses.

Other ideas include offering spectacular images from your resort or lake for guests to download as their desktop image for their computer, showcasing fun or unique electronic postcards they can send to friends and family, or sharing localized birding reports, fishing reports or a hot events list for your community.

Relationship building should be at the core of all your resort's marketing efforts. Blogs or electronic newsletters are great ways to strengthen the relationship you already have with your guests. Plus, in the process of having people sign up for your newsletter, you'll also be updating your email database. Sherman said, "You may not see an immediate response or return when sending a newsletter. However, by putting your name in front of existing and potential guests, you are extending your brand and an open invitation for them to visit you."

Aside from these new website tactics, there are three main ways to generate new visitors to your site: traditional media, search engine optimization (SEO), and pay per click (PPC) campaigns.

The first is easy. With everything you print or send, be sure to include your website address. Your URL (Uniform Resource Locator) or homepage should be one of the key elements that make up your corporate identity.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume and quantity of traffic to your website using "organic" (natural or algorithmic) search engine results. Search engine websites (like Google and Yahoo) do not charge companies for organic results that are displayed as a result of keyword query.



"The best way to think about search engine optimization is that it is ever changing," said Karen Smith, Internet Marketing Strategist with Midwest Captions.

"If you do not change with the roll of the algorithms, you (your website) can become extinct or lost. It's better to be prepared for the changes before something happens to your site. It is always the right time to adapt your SEO marketing plan to include the new strategies, whether that's adding a blog, Facebook, Twitter, link building or article marking. Web 2.5 is here and 3.0 is coming."

Pay per click (PPC) is a paid advertising tactic that appears above or adjacent to the organic search results. With this model, you pay the website host only when your ad is "clicked" by a potential visitor. These ads can be effective. You bid on search

terms — keywords or phrases you think your next guest will use to find the vacation of their dreams. Be sure to think of these terms carefully, and consider also including synonyms and misspellings of the terms. Sometimes this PPC system is called “sponsored links.” Pay per click can be especially good if you’re re-launching your website or have a new cabin or amenity to share (i.e.: a new pool).

Smith added, “I like using pay per click to gather useful data that can guide the direction of my SEO projects. Besides using pay per click for generating traffic, it’s great for surveys, building email lists and determining keyword potential.”

Google Adwords program allows you to choose how much you wish to invest on a weekly or monthly basis. Once the volume of click-throughs reaches your investment level, your ad/listing no

longer appears until the next pay cycle (week or month). Such campaigns can also be regionalized.

You could also consider creating a landing page for each pay per click campaign you run. This new special page should offer immediate information related to the search term and link text you advertised.

Regardless of the tactics or features you use on your website, reading and understanding your website analytics is critical. Your web stats, as they’re sometimes referred, can offer a huge insight into where you need to strengthen your online marketing efforts.

Creating engaging website content may seem like a chore, but it’s key in reaching new travelers.

Outstanding Individual in Tourism

By David Bergman, Explore Minnesota Tourism

During the annual Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference, a CMR member was presented the “Outstanding Individual in Tourism” award. This award is presented to an individual who has actively worked to advance tourism, conducting statewide programs that enhance, underwrite, and promote the tourism industry in Minnesota. This person may be a volunteer or an employee of a tourism-related or other business. Special consideration is given to level of achievements, time period of involvement, and overall contributions to the State’s image and/or tourism industry.

John Edman, director of Explore Minnesota Tourism, introduced the honoree as follows:

This year’s recipient has been in the resorting business all his life. He worked at the family resort from the very beginning and at the age of 9 was promoted to a full-time job in charge of worms and minnows. His father was a pioneer of the Brainerd Lakes area and in 1940 built six cabins here on Pine Beach of Gull Lake. The Resort expanded throughout the 40’s with 12 more cabins, a 20 seat dining room and motel units.

After graduating from the University of Minnesota and serving our country in the United States Army during the Korean War, this evening’s award winner took over the business from his dad and became manager of the family resort in 1957. He and his charming wife oversaw further development throughout the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s that included adding outdoor and indoor pool complexes, winterizing the resort and acquiring two adjacent properties. Today, in addition to 61 cabins, it offers a 185-room hotel and complete conference and meeting facilities. The resort employs 300 people in the summer, 160 in the winter and is Minnesota’s largest 4 season golf resort and conference center, but it’s still run like a small family business.

After 40 years, making work the focus of their life together, neither husband nor wife seemed ready to retire! So in the 1990’s when they were both in their late 60’s, they did the next best thing... they broke ground on 45 holes of world-class golf. Today those courses have received numerous accolades and awards including



Dutch Cragun, John Edman, EMT and Irma Cragun

an Audubon Signature Sanctuary Designation, the 2008 - 2009 Golf Digest Best Places To Play Award which gave it 5 Stars, one of only 24 public courses in the US to receive that prestigious rating.

In addition, he and his wife are committed to helping the community, and they have been involved in numerous organizations including public TV and Radio, the Heartland Symphony, Minnesota Arts Council and Camp Confidence among others. He has served as past President of the Minnesota Resort Association, is a member of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Governor’s Explore Minnesota Tourism Council, and he and his wife were recognized as Brainerd Citizens of the Year in 2005. He’s been making friends and memories since 1940, and each of the 3 million guests who have stayed with him feel like a welcomed friend! Including all of us tonight! He’s a legend in Minnesota Tourism, from the Arrowhead to the Iowa border and beyond; you know him, you love him! Ladies and Gentlemen, our 2009 Outstanding Individual in Tourism:

Merrill “Dutch” Cragun!

LEGISLATION

CMR LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

Each year the CMR meets with elected state officials to help promote family owned resorts.

Governor Tim Pawlenty

Senate Minority Leader
Dave Senjem

House Minority Leader
Kurt Zellers

House Majority Leader
Tony Sertich

John Edman
Explore Minnesota Tourism

Senator Tom Saxhaug

Senator Mary Olson

Senator Paul Koering

Senator Rod Skoe

Senator Lisa Fobbe

Senator Dan Skogen

Senator Tom Bakk

Senator Joe Gimse

Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen

Rep. John Persell

Rep. David Dill

Rep. Larry Howes

Rep. Denny McNamara

Rep. Andrew Falk

Rep. Mark Murdock

Rep. Dave Olin

Rep. Torrey Westrom

Rep. Paul Thissen

Rep. Gail Kulick Jackson

Rep. Paul Anderson

Rep. Al Juhnke

Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Rep. Joe Atkins

Rep. John Ward

Rep. Rick Hansen

Rep. Bud Nornes

Rep. Tim Faust

Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba

Rep. Loren Solberg

Rep. Tom Anzelc

Rep. Bernie Lieder

Rep. Al Doty

Rep. Brita Sailer





Thank you!
To our government officials for taking the time to meet with us!

LEGISLATION

CMR 2010 Day On The Hill, February 23 & 24 Resorters Angle for Support

By Su Ugstad, Balsam Bay Resort



Photo by Andrew VonBank, Photographer MN House of Representatives

It was another successful CMR Day on the Hill event for 2010, and from the feedback so far, a very rewarding and meaningful couple of days for attendees. This year the majority of us boarded the motorcoach in Park Rapids Tuesday morning for a comfortable ride down to St. Paul while enjoying coffee, donuts and cracker-barrels.

Arriving in the city shortly after 11 am, it has become customary to stop in for lunch at Gabe's, located near our hotel, before heading to the Capitol. Good food and more conversing with fellow resorters really gets everyone pumped up for the activities ahead.

We were indeed pumped as we walked into the State Building sporting our fishing vests, 'fish-lure-adorned' bucket hats, and highly recognizable yellow and white minnow buckets! We went directly to a meeting with Senate Minority Leader Dave Senjem where four well-versed, knowledgeable CMR members took a turn explaining the key legislative issues we are focusing on this session.

First is that CMR is supporting a recommendation of the Department of Health to clarify the definition of vacation rental homes. This definition will make the law more clear that businesses that advertise sleeping accommodations are subject to regulation. This law will not affect any cabin owner, only businesses that are renting out lodging establishments to the public that are currently subject to DOH requirements. It's an attempt to create a level playing field by clearing up current laws regarding licensure for lodging establishments.

Another issue is our support of HF 3000/SF 2785 that would prohibit a pre-Labor Day school start date merely to accommodate alternative or flexible learning schedules that do not include additional instructional days. Many of the proposed reforms to promote improved learning outcomes can be accomplished while preserving the post Labor Day School start currently mandated by law. A coalition of 25 or more school districts from southern MN has made application to the Commissioner of Education to approve a Flexible Learning Calendar that would circumvent that law. But we feel the legislature should continue to balance all of the state's interests when considering the school calendar and mitigate the risk of loss of income for the state, as well as loss of jobs (such as) the tourism industry provides.

The next issue involves DNR license agent terminals. While there is support of DNR's efforts for an improved cost-saving web based licensing system, the current online process is not adequate or customer friendly. Therefore, it is imperative that license agents in good standing be allowed

to continue their partnership with the state and not be denied terminals so that "big box" stores may have multiple terminals at each location. Besides an issue of fairness, it also affects an area of service to our customers and an opportunity to educate them about fishing regulations.

Another issue we spoke with legislators about is the Coast Guard Fishing Guide Regulation referred to as the "six-pack" license, which requires guides who carry six or fewer passengers for hire to obtain operating permits. If enforced, these onerous licensing requirements will force many fishing guides out of business and affect resorts that offer boat and pontoon rides to their guests. CMR supports SF 2780, a resolution urging US Congressional action to develop licensing appropriate to smaller vessels operating on inland waters.

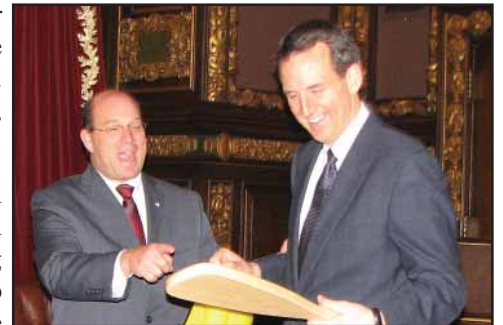
Last but not least, we encourage continued support of Explore Minnesota Tourism (EMT) and their efforts to advertise and promote our state as a tourism destination. Budget cuts aren't a surprise in this economy, but we urge legislators to spare this vital agency any further decreases.

Director of EMT John Edman spoke to us Tuesday afternoon assuring us of their continuing vigor to promote tourism despite the reduced funding. We also met with House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, Rep. Joe Atkins, and House Minority Leader Kurt Zellers before heading to the State Capitol to meet with Governor Pawlenty. Joel Carlson, our CMR lobbyist, presented the Governor with a handcrafted wood paddle from the CMR for his support of the resort industry during his governorship. Engraved with the CMR logo and the words 'Honorary CMR Resorter'. We topped off the evening with dinner at one of Joel's favorite eateries, Skinner's Pub. Incredible food, service, and atmosphere!

We enjoyed a continental breakfast at the hotel Wednesday morning before getting back to the Capitol and State Office Building where we delivered our message to nearly 40 legislators - a process that runs like a well oiled machine because of the effort and hard work by Joel Carlson and his impeccably efficient assistant Tami. Many compliments for Joel are heard from our legislators, and we are very fortunate to have such a well-respected person working on our behalf.

We wrapped things up around 4 pm and got back on the bus for our return trip. Aside from a little rush hour traffic, it was smooth sailing back up north to our starting point.

As always, we thank the many legislators who took the time to speak with us about our issues and concerns. Many thanks to the 26 attendees from 20 different resorts that came down to the Capitol to show our solidarity, and it was especially great to see some first timers to Day On The Hill as well. A special thank you to retired resorter Terry Duhn, who not only drives us safely to and from St. Paul, but also actively continues to rally support for the resort industry. Finally, to Ed Becker, the legislative committee, Joel and Tami, goes a huge thank you for orchestrating this organized event for members of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts.



Support the CMR's Efforts at the Capital

By joining the Congress of Minnesota Resorts you help defend your values and interests as a resort owner.

As a member, you can:

Stay Informed - Get legislative updates so you know what's happening around you and what bills legislators are trying to pass that may affect your resort business.

Be Heard - The CMR Day on the Hill is your chance as a resort owner to speak to your congressmen and women. Let them know your concerns about new legislation.

Make a Difference - None of us is as smart as all of us! YOUR ideas and input can help make a difference in the resort industry.

Go to page 12 for more information on what your membership can do for you!



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