

**2015 Annual Tourism Wrap-Up**  
**November 5, 2015**  
**Courtyard by Marriott**

Debbie Kovalik welcomed everyone to this year's Wrap-Up. She further stated that lodging tax collections for October were up 14% over October of 2014. Year-to-date, collections are up 9.4%. Mistalynn Meyeraan added that media familiarization tours are up 270%. The Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau (GJVCB) is conducting a visitor intercept study through July, 2016 which will assist with identifying marketing opportunities and the economic impact of tourism. The 2016 Official Grand Junction Visitor Guide is in production and our new, responsive website will launch in January, 2016. She thanked the Courtyard by Marriott for hosting this year's Wrap-Up.

**Epic Rides / Grand Junction Off-Road – Dave Grossman:** This year's event was moved to the end of May in conjunction with the Downtown Art and Music Festival. This proved to be successful and as a result they will partner with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) again to combine both events for 2016. This year's race saw a 20% increase in riders with 477 registrants. The dates are May 20 – 22, 2016. Please note these dates are different than last year.

**Eaglerider / Motorcycle Accessories – Steve Martin:** Eaglerider rentals are up 28% this year with over 150 contracts. 25 of those are international visitors and 78 are from outside of Mesa County. For 2016, they are adding more rental features and will pick up customers wherever they are located.

**Varaison Vineyards and Winery – Alex West:** The winery offers a wine tasting seminar in their tasting room which lasts from 30 minutes to 1 hour. Visits to their tasting room are up 27%. This past spring they have added "Fire Pit Fridays" which includes brick oven pizzas and wine. This will start again in May, 2016. They are in the process of opening a restaurant cider bar and bistro in downtown Palisade which will offer brunch, lunch, and dinner. It will be located at 130 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

**Rapid Creek Cycles and Paddleboards – Rondo Buecheler:** Rentals for cruisers and electric bikes are up this year. Their marketing efforts are focused towards bachelorette parties/groups by offering Palisade river trips, wine lunches, and cocktail float trips. They are a sponsor for the Grand Valley Marathon which will be held on May 7, 2016. This is one of the fundraisers for the Fruit and Wine Byway. Mountain biking is growing. The Palisade Plunge is a proposed bike trail that shuttles bike riders up to the Grand Mesa where they can then ride their bikes down the Mesa and end in Palisade. This will help increase summer tourism.

**Fruita Tourism Advisory Council – Paul Aieta:** Since implementing their online booking engine on the Fruita website home page, they have seen a 60% increase in hotel bookings. Lodging tax revenue for Fruita is up 20%. Social media advertising through Facebook has been a focus which has resulted in almost 12,000 likes on their Facebook page. Elevation Outdoors Magazine recently named Fruita as *Colorado's 2015 Top Adventure Town* in the 'Large Town'

category. They are currently working on a major campaign focusing on dealers, suppliers, and others in the bicycle industry to highlight Fruita and the Grand Valley as a biking destination.

**Children's Nature Center – Janet Gardner:** The Center will be moving to Grand Junction from Fruita in December and will double in size. The new location is 561 25 Road which is the back side of Grand Mesa Shopping Center. They have over 120 unique animals used for educational programs catered to pre-school through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as University Zoology and Biology labs. They have hosted many field trips for groups who have traveled from out of town to visit the Center. All of the staff are professionals and includes marine biologists. They are partnering with universities in local, national, and global research.

**John McConnell Math and Science Center – Bambi Harmon and Kay Fiegel:** Kay Fiegel is the interim Executive Director while the Center seeks a permanent director since Teresa Coons has resigned to take another position in the Denver area. Last year, the Teen Makerspace opened in Fruita which includes creation tools such as 3-D printers and a 3-D scanner. They have partnered with Colorado Mesa University for a new computer and engineering building. The Center plans to move into that location in 2017.

**Colorado Association for Viticulture and Enology (CAVE) and Colorado Mountain WineFest – Casidee Shull:** This year the Colorado Mountain WineFest sold out for the first time. Over 6,300 people were in Riverbend Park on the Saturday of the event. Attendees were from 39 states and 5 countries. Next year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, which will be held on September 15 – 18, 2016. Tickets can be purchased online beginning November 30, 2015. Colorado Mountain Winefest was named *Best Community Festival* in 2015 by the Grand Junction Free Press. The Western Colorado Horticultural Society/VinCO conference is scheduled for January 19 – 21, 2016. The CAVE board of directors made the decision to discontinue Urban WineFest. Casidee thanked the GJVCB for starting and supporting WineFest as well as the hotels for hosting all of the attendees.

**Whitewater Hill Vineyards & Winery – Nancy Janes:** The grape harvest was strong this year and because of that, some wines will come back in stock. The vineyard sells grapes to 15 – 20 wineries around the state. Colorado wines are becoming better known because of great festivals with CAVE and other partners such as the Mesa County Fairgrounds.

**Get Air at the Silo – Joe White:** Since opening 18 months ago, they have had over 120,000 visitors from all over Western Colorado. They currently have 65,000 registered users in their database. The goal for 2016 is to go from being an activity to an attraction. They are working with Bonsai Design to install pull ropes, etc.

**Kannah Creek Brewing Company and Edgewater Brewery – Katlin Birdsall:** Kannah Creek Brewing Company recently celebrated its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Sales are up. Since opening Edgewater Brewery 2 ½ years ago, sales are up 20%. Edgewater has hosted beer festivals, concerts, and fundraisers with a highlight being the Big Head Todd concert with 900 people in attendance. They are focusing on distribution throughout Colorado with a small distribution in Idaho. They are looking at distribution of full-strength and 3.2 beer in Oklahoma. They have attended over 50 festivals to promote their name and brand.

**Mountain and Desert Racing – John Klish:** Since 2014, the organization has hosted 13 events and has seen a large increase in participants due to marketing efforts and working with non-profit organizations. The Rumble at 18 Road is a Mountain Bike National Qualifier again for the 2016 season. John is planning 18 months to 2 years out for scheduling races to attract more riders to the area.

**Museum of Western Colorado (Museum of the West, Cross Orchards Living History Farm, and Dinosaur Journey) – Peter Booth:** The museum is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year. Visitors to Dinosaur Journey has increased 10% while visits to the Museum of the West remains flat. This year, Yahoo.com ranked Dinosaur Journey as the 6<sup>th</sup> (out of 10) top place for dinosaur digs and museums. The Cowboy Poetry Gathering is scheduled for November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. The Museum's new website is scheduled to launch any day.

**Grand Junction Rockies – Tim Ray:** For 2015, TV coverage for games increased significantly. Food sales increased 47% and they are looking into increasing their craft beer line. The August 7<sup>th</sup> game honored Todd Helton and was well attended. The organization has submitted a bid for the Pioneer League's All-Star game to be held in Grand Junction. Although they were not successful, they will continue to bid for future games. The 2016 schedule has been released and will include five Friday night home games along with a July 4<sup>th</sup> game. Baseball America, the nation's leading baseball resource, recently named the Grand Junction Rockies the *Short-Season Franchise of the Year* out of 58 ball clubs.

**Townsquare Media – Ken Rivera:** Townsquare Media operates over 650 live events nationwide and includes events held in the Grand Valley such as Country Jam, Loud Wire Music Festival, Western Slope Uncorked, and the Colorado Pork and Hops Challenge. The company recently purchased North American Midway Entertainment which is the largest carnival equipment company.

**US Forest Service – Brenda Winfrey:** Visits to the Grand Mesa Visitor Center were down this year however, retail sales doubled. The new Grand Mesa maps are now available. Saturday Night Interpretive Programs were not well attended, except for the mushroom hunting program. Cabin bookings were solid for the entire summer and the Families in the Forest program (formerly called Winter Cabin Stay) is going well. The Forest Service is now on Facebook. Their focus now is on trail maintenance on the Grand Mesa and Uncompahgre. Trail grants have been applied for and Brenda thanked the GJVCB for their letters of support of the grants.

**America's Best Value Inn / VCB Board - Sharon Woelfle:** Sharon complimented the VCB and gave appreciation for all of the hard work they do and mentioned how much they plan, market, create, and even volunteer time for events.

**America's Best Value Inn – Heather Frame:** 2015 has been a very productive year. They are up in both occupancy and in tour business, and have hosted both German and French tours. The property won "Best of the Best" this year and will be making some new additions this spring.

**Amtrak – Susan Smith:** On behalf of Amtrak she thanked the City of Grand Junction and the Visitor and Convention Bureau for a wonderful Train Day event that featured Amtrak’s past, present, and future on October 10th. Over 1700 people attended the event and it was a big success.

**Grand Junction Regional Airport – David Fiore:** He is happy to be here in Grand Junction and looks forward to working with everyone.

**City of Fruita Parks and Recreation Dept. - Tom Casal:** The Fruita Rec Center will be 5 years old in 2016 and they will be holding an anniversary celebration on February 1, 2016. They have seen a slight increase in sales and a 15% increase in programs participation. Swim lessons are the most popular with 70% attendance from Fruita residents and 30% from outside of Fruita. The Mike the Headless Chicken Festival had less attendance this year and they attribute this to the bad weather that weekend. The High Plains Chicken Show was very successful. The dates for Mike the Headless Chicken Festival in 2016 are June 3-4. The other events they held in 2015 were up in attendance, most notably they had over 200 participate in the Sweetheart Race. They are partnering with the Rim Rock Marathon this year and are holding a .038K (one mile) race on November 7<sup>th</sup> which will benefit Girls on the Run.

**Two Rivers Winery and Chateau – Read by Kim Machado for Billie Witham:** Bookings are up which includes 7 weddings and sales revenues are up 5%. The Wine into Winter event will be held on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Spring Barrel tasting dates are set for April 23-24 and May 14-15.

**Grand Vista Hotel – Phyllis Veale:** Revenues are up both in food and beverage and rooms. Both tours and international bookings are up as well. The lounge offers happy hour every night, entertainment 5 nights a week (Tues.-Saturday) and they have karaoke on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

**City of Grand Junction Parks and Recreation Dept. – Read by Kathy Plunk for Traci Weiland:** The End of Summer Fest had over 100 cars for the car show, 20 different craft beers, and over 1000 people at the concert. The event will be in August of 2016 date TBA. Pork and Hops 2015 saw attendance of 1200 people on Friday night for Pop Evil and 2200 people on Saturday for Montgomery Gentry. On the BBQ side we had 31 pro teams (down 10 from 2014), 14 Amateur Teams (up 5 team from 2014), and 15 youth teams (up from 8 2015). The BBQ side of the event saw over 1000 visitors for the competition and tasting, with the event donating approximately \$3,000 to the United Way from the people’s choice tasting. Feedback received on lower numbers of teams participating indicated it was potentially due to the lack of BBQ team involvement in the entertainment venue for the event. In years past they offered teams concert tickets and the ability to vend BBQ during the entertainment portion of the event. 2016 Date: Sept 9 & 10. The 14th annual Western Slope Senior Games ran from August 22 - 28th. There were over 55 different events that athletes 50 or older could compete in. This year they had a record 270 participants, 116 of those were from out of town. Pickleball is the main event with 92 teams playing at 2 locations over the weekend. They anticipate growth for next year with the addition of several new sports; as word spreads about this exciting and affordable event. They are looking for sponsors for 2016 so if you are interested please contact Lorie Gregor at [970-254-3876](tel:970-254-3876). Southwest Arbor Fest was canceled in 2015; the date for next year will be April 18.

**Two Rivers & the Avalon Theatre – Stuart Taylor:** The Avalon had many successful events in 2015 and there are still more to come this year. Don McLean on 11/6, The Vienna Boys Choir presented by the GJ Symphony on 11/12, Michael Martin Murphey's Cowboy Christmas on 11/30 and a Rocky Mountain PBS Downton Abbey Film Screening on 12/20 to highlight a few. Two Rivers Convention Center had many events such as sporting, trade shows and social. Upcoming at TRCC is the Women's Expo on 11/7, The Symphony Gala on 11/13, the 2015 Turkey Trot on 11/25, and the 3-day 2015 CWMA conference running 11/30-12/2.

**Fairfield Inn & Suites – Zenaida:** She had a great vacation where it was warm and sunny then returned to work and completed her first audit. By all indications 2016 will be a very busy year.

**Hampton Inn – Mary Hawkins:** 2015 has been a great year. In about 3 weeks they will begin closing rooms for a total room renovation to be completed by the end of March 2016.

**Carlson Vineyards – Garrett Portra:** Garrett wanted everyone to know that Parker Carlson is still around and active in the business. 2015 has been a record year in wine sales and production with more wine than ever. They had a crop of later grapes this year and have some new things in store. They have doubled in "Likes" on FaceBook and have increased their use of social media advertising. He thanked everyone in the wine industry for their support.

**Powderhorn Mountain Resort – Sam Williams:** Sam reminded the group that we do get a lot of visitors in the winter and thanked the VCB. Last winter was tough with the lack of snow but they are optimistic for the 2015-16 season. Discounted season pass prices will end on 11/8. The High Speed Quad Lift construction is almost complete and the first of the chairs were to be installed on 11/5. They have made a \$1 million investment in snowmaking equipment and they are planning to have a downhill mountain bike park open the summer of 2016. They are offering a Ski and Stay package through aRes for \$200/person per day.

**Courtyard by Marriott – Sarah Russell:** Courtyard has had a great September and October. Total renovation of rooms will be completed by mid-January 2016. The Bistro had a great year; it opened in February of 2014. The addition of Starbucks and dinner has definitely increased sales.

**Absolute Prestige Limousine Service – Shirleen Hutton:** They have come a long way since their beginning in 1999 with 1 limo. They now have 25 and 37 passenger busses and a total of 22 vehicles. They provided over 75 wine tours for over 475 guests from Jan.-Oct. 2015 and over 1,483 bottles of wine and related merchandise were purchased on those tours. If averaging the wine at \$16 per bottle purchases valued over \$23,728. Hotel stay from tours are estimated at \$22,000, add this to limo revenue and wine purchases for an estimated economic revenue exceeding \$80,000. They have 5 teams of horses as well. They are offering the holiday light tours and with a projection of 250 tours serving 1,150 passengers.

**Bureau of Land Management/McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area – Collin Ewing:**

This year is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NCA designation and they celebrated at Hot Tomato in Fruita. They have received a lot of special use permits including CMU, Rumble at 18 Road, Rock Junction and the Snakebite Enduro race. They have had over one thousand river runners and the outfitting business has been improved with designated campsites. They have had a lot of big game hunters also. They added 3 new horses to the wild horse range resulting in 5 total since 2 were pregnant mares. They are working on a long-term resource management plan 2016 for the 16 zones and 11 areas they cover.

**Holiday Inn & Suites – Trevor Sutton:** Reported an increase in ADR and Occupancy rates. They will be adding a restaurant in 2016, the details are a surprise.

**Downtown Hotels – Cindy Goodrich:** They did not have a lot of group travel this year, the special events and FAM's have really been a benefit to them. No renovations planned for FairField or SpringHill but the Hampton remodel will be done by March 2016.

**Colorado Lavender Associations – Susan Metzger:** This was the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the event and the first year they made money and they sold out of all the T-shirts! They do not charge for the event so it is hard to keep track of attendance but the vendors reported a 15% increase in sales. This year they partnered with several organizations including Rondo's Cruisers. The Colorado Agri-tourism Association's annual meeting will be January 9<sup>th</sup>, she intends on asking for help with the Fruit and Winey Byway. 2016 Lavender Fest will be July 8, 9 and 10.

**Horizon Drive District – Darshann Ruckman:** It is exciting that construction is happening and it will be great and beneficial when it is completed.

**Clarion Inn – Jeff Sauer:** This has been a good year, each month has had record numbers. Jeff said he feels that the longer season contributes to the better numbers and would like to credit all the people at the Wrap up for their success.

**Western Colorado Center for the Arts – Mikkell Kelly:** The Center has upgraded the ceramics lab to be ADA accessible which has been a great change. They added 13 Lectures with 54 people in attendance and Art Camps were up 5–10 %. There will be a new exhibit starting in November that is a Photo Exhibit and Friday Night Demo Night on 11/6 admission is free.

**GJ Air Show 2015 – Julie Shafer:** It has been 3 years since the last Air Show. This year featured the Thunderbirds and several new acts. 24,000 attended with 30% being from out of town. They increased advertising to out of area markets and focused on the Front Range, Vernal and Salt Lake City. They hosted ICAST videographers and the Air Show will be featured in Las Vegas next month. The promotion with Amtrak was beneficial. Other events: The Rocky Mountain Women's Expo has doubled in size! Please remember to sign-up for the Turkey Trot.

**Colorado National Monument – Arlene Jackson:** Up 30% in visitation. 2016 will be the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Parks Service. The "Find Your Park" program is meant to encourage kids and families to visit the parks. Remember the 4<sup>th</sup> grade pass is a free one-year park pass. She offered to add individuals to their email list to send out event information.

**Downtown Development Authority and BID - Robin Brown:** It was a good year with GJ Off-road the Music Festival and Farmer's Market being well-attended. The Car Show was a record breaker this year with 150 cars. Fall Produce Market will be on Colorado Avenue, and they are trying to move more events onto Colorado Avenue. Downtown Tree lighting will be on 11/20/2015, Parade of Lights on 12/6/2015 and there will be a new Art Festival to be held in October 2016. They are now responsible for all downtown permitting so direct people to their office.

**Star Runner Enterprises – Terri Smith:** DreamCatcher Half Marathon and Moonlight Mile 10k and Half Marathon were a great success with the latter bringing in 107 runners from outside Mesa County and 138 local area runners. DreamCatcher Half Marathon is now a course certified race by US Track & Field and will be March 5, 2016.

**VCB Board Member / Grand Mesa Nordic Council – Susie Kiger:** Thanked the VCB and said how much hard work is put into supporting our local business. She is also a Council member on the Grand Mesa Nordic Council and would like to help bring more interest in Nordic Skiing. We have the best Nordic Trails in the country. The next event The WinterStart Race is 12/6/2015 and Saturday lessons begin 11/28/15. For more information go to <http://gmnc.org/>

**Travelodge – Raj Choksi:** It has been a positive year with several renovations. He has not been in Grand Junction very long.

**DoubleTree – Doug Russo:** Doug is the new General Manager and comes from Glenwood Springs. They had a fantastic 2015. They are promoting their Thanksgiving Day Buffet and New Year's Eve Ball with live entertainment, "The Cory Brunson Band".

**Debeque Canyon Winery – Theresa Harris:** Large increase in visitation and purchasing, mostly from the east coast, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Both car and bike traffic has increased. She notices that many people are taking notes and sometimes coming back to make a purchase, sometimes 4-6 cases instead of 2-3 bottles. Shipping is up but she has to be careful to be aware of the shipping rules, since they vary by state.

**Palisade Chamber – Janelle Dawson:** Visitation is up this year 12,000 people attended Peach Festival; the Peach Tour was a hit and they will offer more next year. Brews & Cruise, October Fiber Arts & Quilt Festival and Palisade Blue Grass were all very good. Olde Fashioned Christmas & Gingerbread Contest will be held 12/4/2015 and the parade will be the following day on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

**GJ Regional Airport – Amy Jordan:** Air service was down 1.5% from last year and scheduling capacity was down 5%. The airport lost the CDOT grant for proposed daily air service to Los Angeles, but they will try again. June and August were record months. The results of an Air Service Passenger Demand Analysis were interesting showing 43% are visitors, 53% is originated traffic, 185,000 visitors annually, 31,000 International travelers with 36% of those travelers being from Central America. They would like to survey the needs of the community from the business traveler to individuals and from Colorado Mesa University. They are working on an Air Service Development plan. 2016 will be a year of transition.

**Mesa County Fairgrounds – Jo Carole Haxel:** The construction is over and the new facilities are open, it was a very busy year. The new state of the art BMX track is in full use. Equestrian events are up 30% and the arena was fully booked, they even had to turn 5 events away. February will have more horse shows. Mesa County Fair was up in attendance, it was the 6<sup>th</sup> year for the wine competition and the 2<sup>nd</sup> year for wine tasting at the fair. Other great events were Dinosaur Quest and Western Slope on Tap. She encouraged everyone to check out the activities and the new arena.

**Grand River Vineyards – Naomi Smith:** They have seen an increase in sales and customers are visiting further into the fall months than in the past. They are working on a Riesling with Talbott's Orchard and are picking grapes for ice wine.

**Residence Inn – Amy Hampton:** They have had a solid year of growth. They are renovating the rooms with stainless steel appliances, kitchen, living room and bedroom suites. In 2016 they plan on partnering with the community and vendors such as food trucks and local bands.