



Contact: Patty Janes
989.424.0123
janesp@gvsu.edu
michigancaresfortourism.org



PRESS RELEASE

for immediate release

Michigan tourism professionals clean-up New York City's Coney Island and Jamaica Bay to bring restoration of Michigan treasures event home.

The beginning of the summer travel season has emerged; travelers have begun to imagine the warm sunny beaches, interactive attractions, bonding memories with family and friends, and festive activities delivered by high quality service professionals. A group of Michigan tourism professionals will spend their first week of the summer season helping create those magical travel experiences for Michigan visitors by helping restore two historic New York City area attractions May 29-31. Instead of simply helping 600 professionals restore Coney Island and Jamaica Bay, following Hurricane Sandy, eight Michigan tourism professionals will be learning the event model from the event host, Tourism Cares (tourismcares.org), to bring it back to Michigan and restore local treasures for Michigan Cares for Tourism (michigancaresfortourism.org). As Michigan too has treasured sites all over the Upper and Lower Peninsula that need time, attention, resources, and support that Michigan tourism organizations cannot do alone.

These eight Michigan professionals are part of Michigan Cares for Tourism, a joint volunteer initiative in partnership with Grand Valley State University/Hospitality and Tourism Management (GVSU), Tourism Cares, Travel Michigan, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources/Parks and Recreation Division. Michigan Cares for Tourism will coordinate an annual clean-up event at Michigan tourism treasures throughout the state that are in disrepair. Tourism industry professionals will volunteer their time, talent, and resources to help restore and protect the travel experience for Michigan visitors and residents. The monies generated by sponsorship, and event participation will be utilized to build a grant fund to support future tourism organization revitalization efforts, and tourism student and industry professional development scholarships.

The Department of Natural Resources/Parks and Recreation Division (DNR) has over 350 million dollars in unmet repair and maintenance projects. Home to 101 state parks with lighthouses, beaches, over 240 historic buildings, boating, trails, camping and nature centers, the DNR are the first statewide organization to need help.

Michigan's first project will feature the restoration of the 80 year old Mill Lake camp in the 20,000 acre Waterloo Recreation Area in Chelsea, Michigan October 6 and 7, 2013 (see photos below). Nestled in the beautiful Big 400 (www.big400.org), Mill Lake, the first Outdoor Center to be built, was completed in 1936. The original occupants of Mill Lake were a group of boys from the Detroit Public School System engaged in their first travel and outdoor recreation experience. Mill Lake Outdoor Center remains the most intact example of a WPA Outdoor Center in the Michigan State Park System, with 15 of the 16

original buildings remaining. Since the operation of the camp was discontinued by Michigan United Conservation Club (MUCC) significant degradation has taken place. The efforts taken by Michigan Cares for Tourism will allow the site to be reopened as a destination for urban youth, corporate retreats, family reunions, and individual travel.

GVSU faculty member, Patty Janes has completed two other clean up events with Tourism Cares taking 50 students and professionals to Mississippi's Gulf Coast in 2006 to help repair nine tourism sites following the devastation following Hurricane Katrina. She felt that Michigan's tourism industry needed the same support and as a result in participating, indicated that there were few opportunities to give back to the tourism industry directly. Patty stated that "the opportunity to give back to the tourism industry in such a positive and beneficial way has been unmet by other volunteer experiences for me and those that have engaged with me. Participating in these events made a positive impact on the local economy, created better experiences for travelers, built a stronger sense of team, and personally was rewarding knowing that we were helping others. The groups that participated in these clean-up projects received so many benefits from participating. We were educated about a tourism area, sites, and the challenges faced by these areas. Andrea Pecoraro, a Tourism Cares alumni from Michigan stated "I have a new appreciation for the impact of tourism, have traveled back to, and regularly check to see how the area is doing, in particular, how the site I helped restore. This was one of the best experiences of my life and I can't wait to be engaged with the Michigan initiative".

About Michigan Cares for Tourism

For additional information, or to contribute to Michigan Cares for Tourism, visit www.michigancaresfortourism.org.

About Tourism Cares

Tourism Cares, Inc. is a 501c(3) non-profit public charity that benefits society by preserving the travel experience for future generations by awarding grants to natural, cultural and historic sites worldwide; by focusing on workforce development through our student programs which provide support from classroom to career; and by organizing volunteer efforts to restore tourism related sites in need of care and rejuvenation. During the Coney Island event, thousands of local, regional, and global travel industry volunteers will paint benches, light posts, and trash cans, as well as participate in beach cleanup and dune preservation projects along Fort Tilden Beach. Grants will also be awarded to selected tourism related sites that have suffered losses attributed to Hurricane Sandy. For additional information, or to contribute to Tourism Cares, visit www.tourismcares.org.

