

## Resorter of the Year Award Winners

<b>Year</b>	<b>Resorter</b>	<b>Resort</b>	<b>City/Town</b>
2020	<b>Jim and Kristin Wherley</b>	Sunset Bay Resort	Richville
2019	<b>Clint and Patty Mueller</b>	Balsam Beach Resort	Bemidji
2018	<b>Tim and Karen Senger</b>	Cedar Point Resort	Marcell
2017	<b>Jay and Kim Jamtgaard</b>	Wildwood Resort	Grand Rapids
2016	<b>John and Kim Bowen</b>	Crow Wing Crest Lodge	Akeley
2015	<b>Dave and JoAnn Fallis &amp; Timberly &amp; Jason Christiansen</b>	Finn'n Feather Resort	Lake Andrusia
2014	<b>Mark and Beth Novotny</b>	Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort	Hackensack
2013	<b>Jim and Deb Eickhorst</b>	Kohl's Resort	Bemidji
2012	<b>Tim and Carolyn Aarsvold</b>	Geneva Beach Resort	Alexandria
2011	<b>Ed and Sara Becker</b>	In-We-Go Resort	Nevis
2010	<b>Bob and Lynn Scharenbroich</b>	Black Pine Beach Resort	Pequot Lakes
2009	<b>Bob and Jennifer Bateman</b>	Two Inlets Resort	Park Rapids
2008	<b>Jack and Sherry Frost</b>	Joe's Lodge	Bemidji
2007	<b>Steve and Pat Addler</b>	Cedar Rapids Lodge	Tenstrike
2006	<b>Dana and Cindy Pitt</b>	Bailey's Resort	Walker
2005	<b>Steve and Bunny Fox</b>	Sugar Point Resort	Federal Dam
2004	<b>David and Lisa Moe</b>	Clamshell Beach Resort	Pequot Lakes
2003	<b>Dave and Bev Thompson</b>	Fisherman's Village Resort	Battle Lake
2002	<b>Dave and Mary Jane Keller</b>	Brookside Resort	Park Rapids
2001	<b>Ed and Joanne Fussy</b>	Pimushe Resort	Bemidji

Every year at our Fall Conference, the Community of Minnesota Resorts presents the Resorter of the Year Award. This award is given to resorters who exemplify the spirit and goals of the CMR. Then criteria centers around the operation of a successful and progressive resort business, service to the industry both at the local and state level as well as community service in other areas. Mentoring and helping other resort owners and membership in the CMR are also part of the requirements. Nominations for this award are generated entirely by CMR members. Members are encouraged to consider their fellow resorters and nominate peers that they feel uphold high standards and contribute to our industry.

Each nominated resorter sends in a detailed biography giving information of their journey of resorting and their involvement in the industry. Then the challenge of scheduling, touring, and interviewing commences, not to mention the difficult decision to be made.

The committee that is involved in this process consists of the Resorter of the Year Award recipients from the previous 3 years.

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2020:**

### **Jim and Kristin Wherley, Sunset Bay Resort, Richville, MN**

Every year the Community of Minnesota Resorts presents the Resorter of the Year Award. The CMR usually awards Resorter of the Year at the Fall Conference. However, due to the oddness of this pandemic year, it is being awarded today at the Spring Conference. The award is given to the resort owners who exemplify the spirit and goals of the CMR and live the motto “Resorters Helping Resorters.”

Each year ROY nominations are reviewed by the ROY committee which is made up of the previous 3 award winners. Normally the committee visits each resort for a tour and an interview. This year COVID prevented in-person visits so we conducted the interviews by phone.

The story of our 2020 ROY award winners started on a blind date in college! After marrying they lived in Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri – wherever his job managing commercial real estate took them. They focused on raising their family and are the proud parents of 2 grown children. Eight years ago they jumped into the resort industry. He told us that the resort had good bones when they took over ownership but that it was in need of TLC. Initially, they focused on updating carpet, beds, and “cosmetics”. As time went on, they graduated to bigger improvements such as roofs, windows, and remodeling bathrooms. When adjacent property became available, they relocated their own home to the new property and converted their old home into a reunion house. They recently expanded their campground and built a tiny house that they rent out on one of their new campsites.

Their relationship with the CMR began before they had even closed on their resort. They attended a fall conference where they received a warm welcome from members and felt reassured to know that “people actually do this for a living.” She said she was relieved to know they weren’t crazy! What they appreciate most about the CMR is the opportunity to learn from other resorters. He said “you can’t know everything!” and that they are always picking up information from others. The thing they enjoy most about helping fellow resorters is seeing others achieve success and ensuring the continued viability of the resort industry. Childhood memories of vacations spent enjoying Minnesota resort vacations inspire them to do their part for the industry so that others can continue to experience resort vacations as they did.

They have taken an active role in the organization by helping with the magazine, serving on committees and serving on the Board. One-half of this winning couple has acted as the CMR Office Manager for the last 4 years and he says he has enjoyed helping other resorters in that role. They believe that they have also greatly benefited from his experience because they are plugged into the industry in a way that they wouldn’t have been otherwise. COVID has challenged our ROY award winners as it has everyone. As office manager he felt the responsibility of facilitating communications between state & federal government and CMR members and he worked hard at disseminating volumes of information as it became available. He went above and beyond his role as office manager in fostering discussion related to operating during a pandemic and sharing their own business plans and resources.

Together, in addition to their work for the CMR, they have supported their community by being a member of the Chamber of Commerce, serving on their lake association board, the Ottertail Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, church council and various church committees. They have also been active at the county and state level advocating for the resort industry.

The resort couple who nominated our winners were themselves new resort owners when the couples met at that first fall conference all those years ago. They became fast friends and supported one another through regular get-togethers. They bounced ideas off of each other to help with short and long-range planning and helped each other to fill vacancies. The couple who nominated our Resorters of the Year believe they are deserving of the award because our winners “are always ready to help other resorts both locally and in greater Minnesota. Both have gone above and beyond to make the Community of Minnesota Resorts a better organization and truly live the motto “Resorters helping Resorters.”

We are very pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 Resorter of the Year award are Jim & Kristin Wherley of Sunset Bay Resort.

This year’s committee consisted of:  
ROY 2019: Clint and Patty Mueller, Balsam Beach Resort, Bemidji  
ROY 2018: Karen and Tim Senger, Cedar Point Resort, Marcell  
ROY 2017: Jay and Kim Jamtgaard of Wildwood Resort, Grand Rapids

## Resorter of the Year Award 2019:

### Clint and Patty Mueller of Balsam Beach Resort, Bemidji, MN

This year's Resorters of the Year, interestingly enough, had never stayed at a resort prior to owning one. Before life in resorting, she ran a daycare and he was Mr. Fixit at a creamery, eventually becoming manager. When the dynamics of management became dicey, they started looking for a new career.

Upon their 2nd site visit to their current resort, He was strongly encouraged by the owner to take a boat out fishing for a bit. SHE saw his gleeful face when her husband returned with a bursting stringer of 3 walleyes, several jumbo perch, northern pike, and a couple of muskies. She then nudged her sister who'd come along to look, shook her head and said, "I think we just bought a resort."

Fast forward 24 years. They still enjoy resorting and have no regrets. Maybe they only go fishing twice a year now, but they make those times COUNT. They were able to raise their two sons (aged 6 and 11 at the beginning) in a meaningful lifestyle and now have started discussions with one of the sons about his interest in taking over someday.

A true Mom & Pop establishment, (with the exception of two cleaning helpers) they run everything themselves. The resort now has 8 cabins, 4 overnight full hook-up RV campsites, and 26 seasonal sites. Over the years they've rebuilt several cabins from the ground up. They've continually upgraded the rest and all cabins now have dishwashers, air conditioning, fireplaces, TV's, gas grills and soft water. Along with these more modern cabin amenities in which to appeal to more of a family clientele (rather than strictly fishermen as had previously been the case), they've also added an outdoor heated swimming pool, a fitness room and all kinds of unique hand-made kids playground equipment. They are currently in the process of developing 10 - 12 additional seasonal sites.

This couple says some of their keys to their longevity and success are truth in advertising, immediate guest service (taking care of maintenance issues promptly), and dividing confrontations with guests between both spouses. They say it's also helped that they've been self-motivated, creative, and ambitious while continually setting new goals.

If they had to give advice to potential resorters: they would say "do your research!" Investigate the locale, the lake, and crunch the numbers.

They are active with their community church. They've been involved on a local chamber board of directors, a Cenex Co-op board and have served 24 years with their Lake Association in various officer positions, hand-making wooden chairs for their silent auctions, and testifying at the state legislature for specific local issues.

Over their many years of membership in the Community of Minnesota Resorts, they have served more than 3 terms on the board. Between the two of them, they've worked on all committees: Legislative, Marketing, Education and Membership. They regularly go to Day on the Hill, attend most Workshops, Conferences, Resort Tours and School of Resorting classes. They have been rather visible and approachable at these events and via the group chatline. Apparently, it's a frequent occurrence to have other resorts call them up to ask for advice or to share ideas. He's been known to plan trips to collect big equipment items, like RAVE water toys, as example, and invited other resorts in their area if they'd like him to pick up their items in same trip for a nominal fee to save everyone hundreds of dollars in shipping fees. He even delivered the items right to their doors.

Another resorter recounted them driving 100 miles out of their way to personally drop off a hand-made anchor specially made to secure a Bongo. Resorters helping resorters is a motto this couple has taken to heart. They believe that if we want the resort industry to stay viable, we all have to be involved and put a little time in.

We've certainly appreciated the time and energy they've spent with this group, and look forward to more creative gimmicks for Day on the Hill, bidding on their handcrafted silent auction items, continuing to ask them to share their resort wisdom and watching their adorable bickering during board meetings and crackerbarrels.

We just want to say we see you, we thank you for your contributions, and it is my great pleasure to award this year's 2019 Resorter of the Year Award to Clint & Patty Mueller of Balsam Beach Resort.

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2018: Karen and Tim Senger, Cedar Point Resort, Marcell

ROY 2017: Jay and Kim Jamtgaard of Wildwood Resort, Grand Rapids

ROY 2016: John and Kim Bowen of Crow Wing Crest Resort, Akeley

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2018:**

### **Karen and Tim Senger of Cedar Point Resort, Marcell, MN**

Our ROY winners for 2018 have completed their 17<sup>th</sup> year of resort ownership! Before purchasing the resort, she worked in Eagan for an insurance company, and he worked as an electrician. They spent a lot of time at her parents' resort and during that time they began to dream of owning their own resort. After looking at a number of resorts, they purchased her parents' resort in 2002. They really felt that resort was the one for them. When they moved to the resort, their two daughters were in Kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Today, both girls are independent young women finishing college and starting their own lives.

When they purchased the resort, there were nine rental cabins and 12 campsites. It also had a pool and a full-service restaurant in their lodge serving breakfast and bar food. Over the years, they made many improvements including building themselves a new home attached to the lodge, almost doubling the number of bedrooms on the property, and turning the old owner's home into a rental. They took legal steps to pull the entire resort back under their sole ownership from a cooperative-type ownership model which added another cabin to their rental pool. In recent years, they added two lake homes to the resort property. Today, they have over 30 acres of land and 3,000 feet of shoreline. Over the years, they've also added many amenities such as a beach, water toys, and resort activities. Their plans are to perfect what they are currently doing!

Over the years, they've had to stay on top of the many changes in the industry specifically with the trend toward shorter stays and last-minute bookings. They believe that the addition of online availability has been beneficial in adding to their last-minute bookings, even though they held out for a long time before putting their openings on their website. They also believe their journey from making the resort primarily a fishing resort to a family-orientated resort has helped.

For years, it was just their immediate family doing all the work. They also wish they would have started the resort activities sooner.

Both of these resorters are long-time supporters of the CMR. They have been members for all of their 17 years, have been on the CMR Board for eight years, and she served two years as President. He is the trail coordinator for their local snowmobile club, and she sits on their local lodging tax committee. She has been involved for the last few years with the rewrite of the State of Minnesota's Lodging Code and is currently sitting on a task force to create a Vacation Rentals by Owners (VRBO) Ordinance for their county.

Over all, this year's winners of the ROY Award exemplify CMR's Motto of "Resorters Helping Resorters" and have supported the CMR and fellow resorters in a million ways. We are proud to announce Tim and Karen Senger of Cedar Point Resort as this year's winner of the 2018 CMR Resorter of the Year Award.

<p>This year's committee consisted of: ROY 2017: Jay and Kim Jamtgaard of Wildwood Resort, Grand Rapids ROY 2016: John and Kim Bowen of Crow Wing Crest Resort, Akeley ROY 2015: Jason and Timberly Christiansen of Finn'n Feather Resort, Bemidji</p>
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## **Resorter of the Year Award 2017:**

### **Jay and Kim Jamtgaard of Wildwood Resort, Grand Rapids, MN**

This year's winner has been resorting for many years and along with that had many things to share of their growth, successes, failures, struggles, the joys and challenges of being a resort family. Like many resort owners will say, they had no clue what they were getting into, but as this couple raises their children on the resort, they said 'There is no better environment to raise a family'. The time they spend with their kids vs the kids being in daycare with corporate jobs is immeasurable.

This couple started out in corporate America and felt the drag of life living 9 to 5 working for impersonal management and driving through daily traffic. Owning their own business was a dream and then a priority. After vacationing at a resort in their early years of marriage, a seed was planted, but finances were a hurdle that began from the start being a young newly married couple. Their attempt to raise equity took them into a family business in the restaurant world, but after a short time they said 'It turns out that we are terrible restaurant operators!' As that reality set in the only reasonable alternative was a resort. After 6 months of looking, they found their resort. With still no equity, they borrowed every dime of their down payment from family and also had a co-signature on the original loan. They strongly suggest not to go this route as this major debt has been nearly impossible to rise above.

At the time of purchase in 1999, just 3 ½ years after being married, this young couple now had nine 2-3 bedroom cabins from a resort that started in 1928 and were living in the house constructed around 1910. Yet, this is the place we find the true heart of a committed resort owner!

We will jump ahead to their #1 future goal for their resort, a new home for their family as their current one nears the age of 110 years old!

So, what have they done over the past 19 years? Plenty!!! Of the 9 cabins they had, one was an old trailer and was immediately condemned by the Fire Marshall. The others were in need of a lot of repair. They started out replacing flooring, which at the time they felt was a huge step forward. They next decided to tap into the then statewide low interest loan program for resorts and had the head of the program come and advise them. Being of blunt personality, he then offered his sugar coated advice or straight forward advice. They chose the latter and was told to bulldoze the whole place and start over! So, in 2004, amongst having babies, they replaced 2 smaller cabins to build two 4 bedroom cabins. In 2007, they tore down 4 smaller cabins and replaced them with 3 big ones. In 2014, they tore down and replaced the 4 remaining original cabins as well.

In building these cabins, they also aimed to build a winter business. They feel the money is slim for the work in winter business but does give them the needed cash flow and is the best advertising as many then return to try the resort in the summer. What really made them big players in the winter business was when all 9 cabins became winter rentals. Now, all 9 are frequently rented at the same time.

Throughout the years, they also added a roll-in dock system, a large Rainbow play system, a basketball court, new boats and pontoons, a lot of water toys and a summer kid's activity program.

Their biggest struggle, other than finances, is that they are land locked and their density is maxed out. With that said, picking up some houses to rent as VRBO's is their only current expansion option. They would love to have more land to build more things for kids to do, a better area to have guests gather and maybe add two 2 bedroom cabins. Building a new home, one warmer than the barn they live in, is what they feel will ultimately complete and secure this property, but density is the challenge in building the best house with the space they have. Remember that resorter's heart, when you now see the virtually new, bulldozed and rebuilt resort, yet still waiting for the house.

In tune with their wish list for the perfect resort, they feel they are stretched as far as they are comfortable when it comes to time and work. They are blessed to have his dad living on the resort and her parents at the resort 3 months every summer, but they struggled thru the early years and young children before this happened. So they not only had financial help and backing from family, they also have their actual backs helping with the labor! They also have their now very able 2 daughter's to help at their current ages of 13 and 16. Of course, this also added to the chaos of all of their activities and enjoyment as well.

They are not unfamiliar with activities themselves as they have been involved in the CMR when a wisp of time in all their craziness has allowed. They bought their resort in March and were at a CMR spring workshop that first spring. Other than

one local resort owner, they found no help or support locally. CMR became a life line. They met so many fellow resorters that were freely willing to help in any way. While we were touring the resort, a brand new resort owner drove in with questions and in need of help and their first response other than to be willing to help was the CMR Fall Conference this weekend! They have attended Day on the Hill and helped with the vendor show for the Fall Conference. At the state level, they have been involved with the committee to rewrite the Lodging Code Rules. They feel their best contribution to the CMR is their honesty in responses to questions and help asked for by others. With all the work of their needy new resort and growing a family, they focused strongly on the local level of involvement to keep them close to home. They helped form and run a local resort organization that held its own vendor show, she sits on a local marketing board for their area, has served one term on the local chamber board, she has advocated at the county level for favorable zoning for the resort community, she also sits on their church council and directs any squeezed out free time to their church. While she serves in these capacities, he is the back bone of the resort and family, keeping it running and her grounded. This mutual work assures them of being a strong team.

They have gone from an idea planting honeymoon stay at a resort to 19 years and counting, to hardworking, progressive and successful resort owners. They feel if they are not moving forward, they are losing ground. They were clueless going into this journey in many ways but never realized how the people they met would affect them. Their hope is to be successful and help others but most importantly, give the glory to God. After God's grace, they attribute their success to their sincere love of this life, really hard work and a high appreciation for their guests by giving them respect, excellent customer service, and a value for their vacation. Their current plan is to go directly from the resort to a nursing home, hopefully many years from now. Their life at the resort, even though it occasionally feels like punishment, is their reward for what they hope is a life well lived and feel that really is all the acknowledgement they need.

But we, the committee, feel we need to expand that acknowledgement by presenting this award to them. So join us in congratulating Jay and Kim Jamtgaard of Wildwood Resort in receiving the 2017 Resorter of the Year Award!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2016: John and Kim Bowen of Crow Wing Crest Resort, Akeley

ROY 2015: Jason and Timberly Christiansen of Finn'n Feather Resort, Bemidji

ROY 2014: Mark and Beth Novotny of Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort, Hackensack

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2016:**

### **John and Kim Bowen of Crow Wing Crest Lodge, Akeley, MN**

This young student worked for a few summers at a resort owned by family. Lake life had instilled a positive impression and was a force in pursuing this business at a later time in life. These resorters have worked hard, updating cabins with new roofs, bathrooms, kitchens, windows, carpets, a new lodge roof, including putting up 3 new buildings. They remodeled a cabin complete to the studs, while trying to honor the history of their property. They are progressive, adding WI-FI to the resort, though, they did not succumb to television.

This resort actually didn't start out as a resort. It was built by a logging camp as a place to eat. Over the years, it was turned into a chicken farm, then a Camp that brought girls in by train to learn "Etiquette". They actually found feathers and an old chicken coop door when they remodeled one cabin. With much involvement in CMR, they stated that "the education, camaraderie, and legislation are of greatest importance and benefits to them." They have become mentors to other resorters on their lake, giving advice, taking them to dinner, and even sending prospective guests their way.

They use CMR Associate members whenever possible. She has served on the CMR board for 10 years, facilitating countless Spring Workshops, Fall Conferences, along with hosting Ladies School of Resorting Classes, and a CMR Resort Tour. She has written several articles for the CMR magazine over the years. She offers advice on the chat line, works on the Committee for Membership Drives, re-written packets and helped develop new membership drive and welcome communications. They attend Day on the Hill when able, work hard on the Labor Day School Start, and meet and write legislators as a result of her dealings with Joel. She keeps in contact with both, State Senator and Representatives.

They were one of the 3 resort advisors contributing to the University of MN Sustainable Tourism Source Book, working with Andrea Schuweiler and Ingrid Schneider. They are both active in their local chamber as well as their lake association in which she has served as president for the last 6 years. She created annual newsletters for the past 10 years. She wrote a lake management plan and got approval for several DNR grants over the past few years. They partnered with the DNR on a Pike Spawning Project for 16 years. On separate occasions, they worked with MN Dot, Soil and Water Conservation, and the local AIS Taskforce in a Watercraft Inspection Program on their lake. They both attend Lake Management Planning Team training meetings. She developed an AIS fund to combat Curly Leaf Pondweed on their lake. They have collected funds for the past 7 years and he does the bulk of chemical application for their resort, most of the neighbors nearby, and for a fellow resort across the lake. He has donated countless reflexology sessions to their church and community. Their list goes on with accomplishments.

They are both highly educated. He has a background in School Maintenance and Gardening, Reflexology Institute, classes, etc. She has Social Work skills, speaking 5 languages, including Japanese, Arabic, French, and Spanish. To understand this couple, we have to go back to their chance meeting. He was in the process of selling his home for a move and a new start. There was a resort waiting for him in Canada. Their story begins: His realtor was away on convention, so she filled in on the call. They fell head over heels for each other. He said she was enamored by him. She laughed. Married in a resort, barefoot in a fire pit, is how they fell in love with resorting.

They managed 112 apartments until they took the plunge. It took them 3 years to find just the right resort. They packed up and moved from Iowa to Minnesota. They arrived in February with 3 feet of snow on the ground. They felt they were meant to be there. Their first few years were tough with no maintenance person. He was busy with hospital grants while working in integrated medicine at a pain clinic. She learned a lot about toilets. Their resort has 19 cabins, two daily campsites, and a lodge with a lot of history dating back to 1898.

They have a wonderful, unique resort located in a relaxing atmosphere. We were impressed with not only the history on how the resort came to be and how successful it is today, but also how much heart is put into the daily operations. They are proud of increasing their repeat guests in their core summer season throughout their past 16 years. They have also built up their shoulder seasons by 428% with women's groups and retreats. This is not just a business, but a passion. Realizing they cannot wear all the hats all the time, they now share this passion with their family. Her "brother" and His "son" are committed to their family business. They built homes on the property to house the two couples that are now part of the team. They make the resort experience more than just a vacation. Instead of putting energy into developing more or bigger cabins or campgrounds, their choice has been to continue to channel energy into deepening the experience guests can have while they're at the resort. The idea of making people feel 'at home', safe and supported is an important communication and an environment they endlessly strive to provide.

They have managed to succeed in the resort industry and have capitalized on a niche that is all their own: holistic healing, green cleaning, reflexology, and uses of essential oils. They stated that "they are grateful to be doing this". Their roots are planted with no plans to leave. Their mission statement from day one: "Our goal at the resort is to provide a peaceful retreat in the nurturing, natural surroundings of Minnesota's north woods, in order for our guests to have an opportunity to relax, play, connect with others and themselves, and to increase their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing." We can all learn something from their success! It gives us great pleasure to announce John and Kim Bowen of Crow Wing Crest Lodge, 2016 Resorters of the Year!

This	year's	committee	consisted	of:
ROY 2015:	Jason and	Timberly	Christiansen	of Finn'n Feather Resort, Bemidji
ROY 2014:	Mark and	Beth	Novotny	of Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort, Hackensack
ROY 2013:	Jim and	Debbie	Eickhorst	of Kohl's Resort, Bemidji



## **Resorter of the Year Award 2015:**

### **Dave and JoAnn Fallis, Timberly and Jason Christiansen of Finn'n Feather Resort, Lake Andrusia MN**

The 2015 Resorters of the Year have a story that is similar to many. It began with the desire to leave a busy life style and find an environment where they can work and raise a family in a more meaningful way. It's no surprise that the allure of a pristine lake in Northern MN became the answer for this multigeneration family. The grandparents, along with their daughter and son-in-law and their three children, made the journey north from Iowa in 1978. The grandfather and son-in-law had both served in law enforcement.

The resort that caught their eye was built in the 1920's, and had a large dance floor and dining room, which attracted not only guests, but many neighbors in the area. It was a perfect destination. The early days were a whirlwind. They cooked breakfast, lunch and dinner every day in the restaurant, staffed the long hours at the bar, maintained the yard, beach and boat rentals, catered to the many requests of the guests, and cleaned cabins in between. As their vision of a family resort started to take shape, they decided to close the restaurant and bar, start upgrading the amenities, raise the rates, and work towards making the resort "Easy to find . . . Hard to leave".

To quote one of the grandchildren: "I grew up at the resort, and lived the high life as a resort kid. Back in the early days I was oblivious to all the hard work my grandparents and parents put in. I just enjoyed having new friends each week, fishing whenever I wanted, and playing in the woods." Today, her children are now living and enjoying the same life, finding that their summer friends are some of their best friends.

There have been many changes and improvements over the years. They started big with paving the roads in the entire resort, and adding playground areas. Then they went to work on the cabins and added kitchens, screen porches and air-conditioning. They expanded the cabins, removed entire cabins, and built larger 3 bedroom log vacation homes. They were one of the first resorts in the area to build a large 8 bedroom reunion vacation lodge, and have since built two large 4 bedroom log homes. The log homes are exquisite, with beautiful hand crafted workmanship. Every year there is a long list of updates, from carpet, to cabinets, to new TV's. Staying up to date with the installation of satellite TV's and wireless internet has been the latest challenge.

The grandpa was a driven business man, and drove the progression of the resort. He never quit working. There was always work to do! The son-in-law is a handy man and carpenter, and helped build many of the cabins. He jokingly compared the men's relationship to "Archie Bunker and Meathead." However, prankster that he is, we think he secretly took time off to enjoy the resort with his family, and we know he spent a lot of time fishing! He truly enjoys the guests, and with a sparkle in his eyes, he can tell you many stories of pranks that he pulled over the years. Ask the family about the "bear" story! He is still working on projects to this day.

The grandma, daughter, and the granddaughters were always busy, and are to be commended for their tireless hours of customer service, staff management, planning, ordering, cleaning, and other numerous tasks that are often taken for granted. Two of the granddaughters have now chosen other careers, but one of the granddaughters has chosen to carry on the family legacy, and after returning from college, where she studied Micro Biology, she married and brought her husband into the family who would bring his skills into the mix and get along famously with the grandpa and son-in-law. Although they have now passed, grandpa and grandma continued to help every summer, right up into their 80's. Despite being busy with the everyday adventures of resorting, this family has been extremely driven to share their experience and expertise with other Resorters. The grandpa was one of the early resorters who helped organize and promote CMR. Both he and his son-in-law were on the board for many years, and the granddaughter has been on the board for the past 10 years. The family still spends many hours volunteering with the CMR conferences, education, School of Resorting classes, and Day on the Hill. As for helping other resorts, the grandpa was a pioneer in the concept, and was always quick to offer advice and help other resorters. We heard of many who would call to ask for advice on topics such as what kind of carpet to buy, how to lower taxes, and to how to deal with guests. He claimed that CMR members literally saved many resorts in the area by providing help of any kind when needed. We were astounded by the continued passion to help others as shown by his son-in-law and the rest of the family as they carry on their grandpa's ideals.

Both the grandpa and his son-in-law were involved on the local town board for many years. They were both members on the school board and numerous other local committees. The granddaughter has also helped with township issues along with

being on the board of the lake association, and she currently volunteers at the local school by helping kids in the classrooms, fund raising, and helping with other projects that parents are so often called upon to do.

The resort is open year round and includes 42 acres and over 1300 feet of shoreline. There are 20 tastefully furnished vacation homes ranging from 1 to 8 bedrooms, a beautiful lodge with game room and store, 2 family homes, a heated pool, hot tub, 2 large sand beaches, boat and water toy rentals, guide service, large areas for playgrounds and ball games, and it is situated in a prime location near many attractions. In talking to one of the resort guests, we learned that the reason they came back to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary at the resort was because of the quiet and peaceful setting, and the warmth they feel from the owners, who even remember what kind of bait they like to use! This close knit family is excited about the future of resorts in Minnesota, and they plan to keep the resort in the family for many years to come.

The dream of living in an environment where they can work and raise a family in a more meaningful way continues. It's a great family partnership, as they all work together, and can cover the resort for each other to enable each family to have quality vacation and family time. The granddaughter told us, "My grandpa taught me early that we will never get "rich" from the resort, but we will have a great place to raise a family and enjoy life. We have learned that no matter what, you need to keep investing in your resort, whether replacing entire cabins or just curtains, it all matters. Never be afraid to raise your rates, and keep on the edge of what's the next "new" thing." We saw this passion in every family member and witnessed misty eyes as we heard their story. So, with deep respect for a family that has honored the spirit and goals of CMR, we are honored to present this award to the Lake Andrusia, Finn'n Feather Resort family: Dave and JoAnn Fallis, their daughter Timberly and her husband Jason Christiansen, and their children Kenzie, Kolby and Kayce And also in honor of JoAnn's parents, the original Grandparents, Dick and Doris Clemens

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2014: Mark and Beth Novotny of Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort, Hackensack

ROY 2013: Jim and Debbie Eickhorst of Kohl's Resort, Bemidji

ROY 2012: Tim and Carolyn Aarsvold of Geneva Beach Resort, Alexandria

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2014:**

### **Mark and Beth Novotny of Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort, Hackensack, MN**

When found at a crossroads in their careers, with their varied skill sets, and fond memories of resorts from their childhood, a resort seemed like the perfect fit for their family. In 2002, they found their piece of heaven at Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort in Hackensack.

From the start, they strove to provide their guests with an enjoyable recreational experience constantly upgrading their cabins and amenities. However, this resort has gone above and beyond this when it comes to others, not just with their guests. They are always willing to help out other resorters. They have high values and standards and greet each new day or project with enthusiasm, conveying a positive attitude to guests and fellow resorters!

This couple is an inspiration to many, not only by running a successful business but also with their involvement in their church, community and CMR. The following is a list of their recent endeavors.

- CMR Board for 11 years serving as secretary, vice president, president for two years and currently past president.
- Served on the Explore Minnesota Tourism Council for past six years.
- This couple has been involved with other resorts from helping with small clean-up projects after windstorms to plumbing remodels, to mentoring new resorters.
- Served on their local chamber of commerce board and was president for two years.
- Served as the chairman of the National Chainsaw Sculpting Invitational for two years, which was a big success to their small community and continues to draw people in the fall.
- Served on the board of their lake association and were both involved in rewriting Cass County Shoreland Rules for resorts, with part of those rules being taken by the state and included in statewide shoreland rules for resorts.
- Chairman of the Hiram Township Board.
- Active church members: Currently, the chairman of the ministry board, involved with the AWANA program, ushers, greeters and Bible Study Fellowship leaders, and now in training to be a Stephen's Minister.

We can all learn by these examples of selflessness. They have built a strong sense of community within their region and our resort association. Join us in congratulating Mark and Beth Novotny!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2013: Jim and Debbie Eickhorst of Kohl's Resort, Bemidji

ROY 2012: Tim and Carolyn Aarsvold of Geneva Beach Resort, Alexandria

ROY 2011: Ed and Sara Becker of In-We-Go Resort, Nevis

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2013:**

### **Jim and Deb Eickhorst of Kohl's Resort, Bemidji, MN**

At a fairly young age this year's award recipients retired from the campground business and went camping themselves for a few years. During these years, they spent some of their time looking at for potential businesses: • Golf courses • Mini golf • Campgrounds • Resorts The answer turned out to be a resort, but which one? The new guiding question became, "Which resort could we be proud to show our family?" They found the right one and made the purchase, moving to the property in 2003.

By the time they took over, one of the cabins had burned down, leaving just a charred hole. Told by two different sources that the cabin could not be rebuilt, this couple mustered their resolve and set about rebuilding it themselves, launching a successful style of working together with the mantra, doing as much as you can yourself, that still serves them well today. The style has been extended to staff, with even some of the young cleaning girls being taught to lay tile and build furniture.

In ten years, their efforts have resulted in successful completion of multiple cabin remodeling projects that included nine kitchen upgrades, siding and re-facing ten cabins and the lodge, re-roofing twelve cabins, replacing 35 windows and 34 doors, adding flat screen TVs to 14 cabins and air conditioning to all the cabins and the lodge, replacing linoleum with tile in 16 cabins, updating lighting in several cabins as well as many other upgrades in every cabin.

In addition to structural changes, they have replaced most cabin appliances, added coin-operated washers and dryers, and updated furniture with many pieces they've built themselves. They added five docks and lifts, a water trampoline system and multiple water toys. The playground was upgraded and daily activities were added. They've kept pace with the new technologies, adding free Wi-Fi and creating a new website that includes 360 degree tours.

Eickhorsts also purchased back four mini-homes, also known as tree houses, and purchased an option to build on already owned property from a prior owner. Purchase of neighboring property, and any property, on their three-lake system for potential rental is a part of this couple's long-range vision for their resort. Although it seems there would be no more time left in the day for these busy resorters, they have indeed found time...to be active in their community:

- Coaching youth soccer, baseball, basketball, football and hockey (even running the Zamboni during games and tournaments).
- Serving on boards and supporting local groups such as Pheasants Forever and the local Innkeepers Association. ....to be involved in the resort industry:
- Hosting CMR meetings, workshops and social gatherings at their resort, serving as marketing chair for four years and being a part of many CMR committees as well as running several cracker barrels over the years.
- Regularly participating in Day on the Hill.
- Working with Explore Minnesota Tourism, CMR and Minnesota Resort & Campground Association to create the co-op TV ads promoting vacationing in Minnesota.
- Providing an idea framework for the CMR website and helping the team implement those ideas.
- Staying in touch with local and state offices about resort industry issues.

Service to their community and to the industry mirrors the kind of service they provide for their guests, believing that guests deserve an experience not just a vacation. This belief has resulted in their resort slogan, "Where families build lifelong memories." It has also played into their personal slogan, "If you are not moving forward, you are falling backwards." There is no status quo. Their successful and progressive resort is a reflection of time devoted to the business, sweat equity and investing back into the property and employees. They truly exemplify the spirit and goals of the CMR. Congratulations Jim and Debbie Eickhorst.

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2012: Tim and Carolyn Aarsvold of Geneva Beach Resort, Alexandria

ROY 2011: Ed and Sara Becker of In-We-Go Resort, Nevis

ROY 2010: Bob & Lynn Scharenbroich of Black Pine Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2012:**

### **Tim and Carolyn Aarsvold of Geneva Beach Resort, Alexandria, MN**

He said, "Do you want to live on the lake and work on the lake?" She said, "I'd do anything to be back on the lake." So, they bought a resort. Tim and Carolyn purchased the resort in 1996. He said, "Right from the start, we removed every negative sign and reworded everything into a positive, into the vacation mentality of having some fun! Our goal was to make the resort friendly for the people who come here." In their second year of business, they were the first resort in their area to add air conditioning to their cabins. Since then, they purchased a couple of adjoining properties, did extensive remodeling, and worked new units into the rental pool.

The resort currently includes two historical cabins that were built in the 1920s, a cottage annex that was built in the 1940s, and newer additions that total 16 lodging options, plus a game room and office. This couple's skills complement one another. His energy is best spent as handy man, grounds and cabin maintenance, and overseeing the finances. She works on marketing, decorating, and supervising the staff of approximately 20 part-time employees. She makes a conscious effort to build strong relationships with her guests.

Early on, the informal feedback received from guests quickly became a guiding force she used to hone her approach to resorting. In a nutshell she said, "Relationships matter." They believe that education is important to running a successful resort. They regularly attend CMR conferences and workshops, resort tours, and the Explore Minnesota Tourism annual conference. They also gather regularly with a core group of progressive resort owners in their area to share ideas.

Because of their commitment to tourism, Tim and Carolyn stay involved in area organizations. They are on their chamber of commerce marketing board and he received the 2009 Friend of the Chamber award. Tim also serves on the boards of their lake association, their area hotel & hospitality organization, and Kiwanis. Having recently retired from teaching, Carolyn serves as a board member for the Lake Region Arts Council, and was recently appointed to be on their chamber of commerce executive board, representing the area lodging facilities. She is also involved in leadership training, various music activities at church, and the Central Lakes Symphony.

They joined the Congress of Minnesota Resorts in 2001. During their membership they have provided a helping hand in MANY areas of the organization, from conferences to marketing and from help with the Minnesota Resorter magazine to membership. He is a long time veteran of the annual CMR Day on the Hill. He has served on the board of directors since 2006, sharing his gift of financial acumen by filling the role of treasurer since 2006. As if owning and operating a 16-unit, year-round resort weren't enough, they also own a smaller apartment complex and a motel that offers extended stay options. Among the three properties, they have experience in nightly, weekly, monthly and seasonal rental.

Now looking ahead to their 17th season, they're still enjoying both living on the lake and working on the lake. They are truly an asset to the resort industry and the community in which they live. We are pleased to announce the 2012 Congress of Minnesota Resorts Resorters of the Year Award goes to Carolyn and Tim Aarsvold of Geneva Beach Resort in Alexandria.

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2011: Ed and Sara Becker of In-We-Go Resort, Nevis

ROY 2010: Bob and Lynn Scharenbroich of Black Pine Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes

ROY 2009: Bob and Jennifer Bateman of Two Inlets Resort, Park Rapids

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2011:**

### **Ed and Sara Becker of In-We-Go Resort, Nevis, MN**

Their resort journey began when they became engaged while on a visit to the family's resort. Fourteen years later, they bought the resort from Sara's parents and became business owners. Although they had some first-hand knowledge of resort operations, the purchasing of a resort brings major lifestyle changes. Not to mention leaving the security of well-paying jobs and relocating their two children to a small northern Minnesota town. Yet their dream to be second-generation resort owners won out and they made the move.

When Ed and Sara purchased the resort it had ten cabins, four motel units and twelve seasonal RV sites. They had a vision to turn this little fishing resort into a family fishing vacation destination. They have worked hard to overcome the obstacle of a road running through their resort and added unique features to draw activity away from the lake and the road.

They now have an in-ground heated swimming pool, a large playground, large water toys for the beach and weekly scavenger hunts. They have incorporated unique amenities including a chipping shot and putting green and an outdoor movie theatre with surround sound to their list of activities guests can partake in. They purchased ten acres, expanded the resort, dug a pond, transplanted trees and added 42 RV sites around it. In addition to modernizing and remodeling their cabins, game room, motel rooms and fish cleaning building, they have upgraded their cabins with flat screen TV's, HI-DEF satellite, wireless internet and air conditioning.

Their future plans include replacing two existing cabins and adding three new cabins, a Frisbee Golf Course and who knows, maybe another resort. This couple is committed to their business and their community.

They have been consistently involved in the CMR organization: serving in executive roles on the Board of Directors and in the Legislative Branch of the organization. They are enmeshed in their community: serving on their Local Chamber of Commerce, in their Lake Association, at Church and in their School District. Ed and Sara are always willing to look for ways to get projects done while helping others. They have employed Work Kampers for much needed help as well as local workers through the CEP program, mentoring these workers in exchange for labor, a win-win proposition.

Ed and Sara say their success comes from capitalizing on each of their strengths, being flexible, anticipating their guests needs and paying attention to details. They stick to their motto: "If you aren't moving forward, you are moving backwards." After nine years of owning and working at their resort it is obvious, they are creating a wonderful vacation destination in Northern Minnesota for generations to come. Ed and Sara truly fulfill the CMR motto of Resorters helping Resorters.

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2010: Bob and Lynn Scharenbroich of Black Pine Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes

ROY 2009: Bob and Jennifer Bateman of Two Inlets Resort, Park Rapids

ROY 2008: Jack and Sherry Frost of Joe's Lodge, Bemidji

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2010:**

### **Bob and Lynn Scharenbroich of Black Pine Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes, MN**

This year's award recipients have proven themselves during their years as resort owners, as well as stewards of the land and waters they live on. Becoming resort owners several years ago, they started with a 6 cabin resort, added land and lakeshore over the years and now have a 13 cabin resort that is open year round.

They have been members of the CMR for many years, serving as board members and working with several presidents during those years. They helped organize fall conferences, gave presentations at conferences, and were instrumental in developing the CMR Scholarship program, a successful program that has provided \$500 scholarships to many children since its beginning. This couple has hosted resort tours, written articles for the Minnesota Resorter and has been wonderful mentors to their area resorts...as well as to their fellow CMR members.

This year's award recipients have also been involved in tourism efforts within their community. He has served on the board of their area property owners association and has worked as a volunteer with their local fisheries committee. She has been deeply involved in the development and progress of the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway, which has benefited the community and tourists arriving to the area. She just recently ended a 12 year run as the Scenic Byway Association's president and now is a member of their township's long-range planning committee. Both have served in various capacities within their area lodging tax association for ten years. They are also active in their church and have been involved with the Boy Scout program in their area.

This couple came about resorting naturally, as she grew up with parents who owned their own resort for nearly 25 years. When they were asked the question, "How have you been able to maintain a successful and progressive resort?" their answer was "From the first year, and still today, our focus is to reinvest in the business at the highest level we can afford at the time.

As important as the physical investments in the property is the investment in relationships. Caring about customers, knowing what they like, and anticipating their needs as much as possible is the best way we've found to fill cabins. The other important category of relationships is with other local businesses."

Our award goes to a couple who, after 33 years in the business, have no immediate plans for retirement. They still love the life and it shows in their attention to detail with their cabins, landscaping, improvements and their concern for their customers. This couple is truly an asset to the resort industry and the community in which they live. It is our privilege and honor to present the 2010 Congress of Minnesota Resorts "Resorter of the Year" Award to Bob & Lynn Scharenbroich of Black Pine Beach Resort in Pequot Lakes.

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2009: Bob and Jennifer Bateman of Two Inlets Resort, Park Rapids

ROY 2008: Jack and Sherry Frost of Joe's Lodge, Bemidji

ROY 2007: Steve and Pat Addler of Cedar Rapids Lodge, Tenstrike

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2009:**

### **Bob and Jennifer Bateman of Two Inlets Resort, Park Rapids, MN**

Bob and Jennifer have been involved in resorting for a long time. Jennifer actually grew up at a resort and Bob worked at a neighboring resort. While they were engaged, they talked about someday owning a resort, but ended up working in the outside world for several years. Thirteen years ago they were pulled back into the resort on which Jennifer grew up. They are exemplary CMR members who have been active in many facets of the organization, including submitting articles for the Minnesota Resorter, teaching a School of Resorting class, hosting a fall resort tour, attending nearly all CMR conferences and functions, moderating cracker-barrels, attending the Day on the Hill seven times, and serving on the CMR Board for seven years on numerous committees, including Jennifer serving three years as President. They live the CMR's motto of "Resorters Helping Resorters." You can always count on them to pitch in and help.

Outside of the CMR, they are also active on their Chamber marketing committee, local bank board of directors, golf course board of directors, school activities foundation, 4-H volunteers, their church and Sunday school, and much more. While raising their three children, who are now old enough to help with some resort duties, the Batemans have made their 13-cabin resort successful by providing a high level of service and keeping their guests' vacation experience their #1 priority. Success has also come about by keeping close tabs on the financial side of the business and reinvesting in it by continually making big and small improvements and adjusting their rates accordingly. They've added two 4-bedroom cabins, upgraded several other cabins, improved the landscaping and added many amenities.

They attribute their success to not being afraid to ask questions of other progressive resorters and being willing to take some risks. For example, two years ago they decided to expand their business and become a 2-resort operation when they bought a second resort over an hour away. That's a challenge many resorters would hesitate to take on, but the Batemans are truly progressive resorters and their success has clearly been worth their efforts. Bob and Jennifer are assets to the resort industry and the community in which they live. Congratulations to them for this well-deserved award!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2008: Jack and Sherry Frost of Joe's Lodge, Bemidji

ROY 2007: Steve and Pat Addler of Cedar Rapids Lodge, Tenstrike

ROY 2006: Dana and Cindy Pitt of Bailey's Resort, Walker



## **Resorter of the Year Award 2008:**

### **Jack and Sherry Frost of Joe's Lodge, Bemidji, MN**

The recipients of the 2008 CMR Resorter of the Year award are Jack and Sherry Frost of Joe's Lodge on Lake Andrusia in Bemidji. Jack and Sherry came to resorting eleven years ago. After their first summer, they attended the CMR Fall Conference and came home elected to the board. They have served two terms on the board. They have also been active in workshops, conventions and Day on the Hill, as well as contributors to the Minnesota Resorter magazine.

By being involved with the CMR, they became familiar with other resorts and were able to acquire ideas and have the confidence in their decisions to improve their resort. When they arrived at their resort, they had 21 cabins; most were very old and outdated. Today they have twenty cabins of which fifteen are new and the other five have been remodeled and updated. Even with fewer cabins, they have a larger capacity. When they replaced old cabins recently, they were able to take advantage of the new shoreline regulations that the CMR has been instrumental in passing.

Besides giving credit to the CMR, they say that planning, being pro active and having a good financial person has allowed them to maintain a progressive, successful resort. They are very open and willing to share their ideas with others and help in any way they can. If you're new to resorting and want some ideas, pay a visit to these people and tour their resort.

In addition to their CMR and resort activities, Jack and Sherry raised their four children at the resort and have been involved in numerous community activities. They have been active with the Bemidji and Cass Lake Chambers, served on the Northwoods Tourism Council, township planning and zoning board, Mississippi Headwaters board, Mississippi River Parkway commission, and Minnesota Tourism Advisory Council. Jack has served two terms as a county commissioner and the Sherry has been chairman of their township board. They have been active in their school district and their church, serving on the Elders board.

If this wasn't enough to do, Sherry opened a gift shop in Bemidji. These two are wonderful examples of people dedicated to progressive, involved and committed resorting. Congratulations, Jack and Sherry!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2007: Steve and Pat Addler of Cedar Rapids Lodge, Tenstrike

ROY 2006: Dana and Cindy Pitt of Bailey's Resort, Walker

ROY 2005: Steve and Bunny Fox of Sugar Point Resort, Federal Dam

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2007:**

### **Steve and Pat Addler of Cedar Rapids Lodge, Tenstrike, MN**

This year's Resorter of the Year Award is being awarded to an outstanding couple. This year marks their 20th year of resort ownership. This couple has completely remodeled and modernized their resort. Every year their energy and love for resorting shows as they add amenities and make improvements to this already very unique resort. Instead of sitting back and coasting, this couple reinvests in their resort. They recently designed and built a new duplex unit creating additional revenue.

This couple knows that not all new features must generate income to add value for their guests. Last year they totally replaced the heated swimming pool, and this year added a large addition onto the lodge building. Another truly identifying and unique feature of the resort is that each cabin has a covered attached carport.

According to the Regional DNR Fisheries Manager, this resort couple has been very supportive of the DNR activity on Medicine Lake. Last year at the DNR Fisheries Roundtable, he told a story of a lake that has shown outstanding results from experimental regulations. In 1988, this lake was full of small hammer handle Northern Pike. The DNR implemented experimental regulations to try to grow larger fish. This lake responded better than any other lake in Minnesota. The program was so successful that the slot has been changed from the original 22-30 to the existing 24-36 inch protected slot. The DNR said this result was due to the dedication of this resort couple to educate and encourage their guests to catch and release northern pike.

The Addlers were supportive from the onset. This couple has gone above and beyond to promote the regulations. They display a "catch and release" board, using photos they have taken with a digital camera, and immediately post the large fish for others to see. Also on the wall, they keep a log of released fish, which is given to the DNR Fisheries Manager to track angler success and fish growth. They have even participated in gill netting and electrofishing to aid the DNR in its efforts to improve the fishery.

This couple is very involved in their community by acting as church officers, teaching Sunday School, refereeing ball games, and taking tickets at school functions. They have held tours of the resort for community leaders to show what is offered at their resort. Steve and Pat hope that each week they find a kid and make a difference in his or her life. Their goal is to treat their guests like they would want to be treated.

This couple is an outstanding example of CMR involvement. They have served 5 terms on the CMR board, one of those as CMR President. They have attended every spring CMR workshop and every CMR fall conference since they joined the CMR. They participate in almost every CMR sponsored event. Congratulations, Steve and Pat!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2006: Dana and Cindy Pitt of Bailey's Resort, Walker

ROY 2005: Steve and Bunny Fox of Sugar Point Resort, Federal Dam

ROY 2004: David and Lisa Moe, Clamshell Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2006:**

### **Dana and Cindy Pitt of Bailey's Resort, Walker, MN**

This year's winners decided that owning a resort was definitely on their list of "dream jobs" as they were dating in college, not seriously thinking that it would ever really happen. Then about 15 years later, in 1999, they purchased their resort. They moved from the Brainerd area, where they both had desk jobs, and took over his parents' business.

As is usual for us all, the first few years went by in a blur, which could have partially been blamed on the fact that they had 2 boys, 1 and 3, when they began resorting. They hired only cabin cleaners the first couple of years and managed the hectic pace with sheer determination. They provided free fish cleaning and spent many long evenings, after putting the boys to bed, down in the fish cleaning house taking care of fish.

They eventually determined that they needed a full-time dockhand and have had one ever since. A few years later, their daughter arrived just hours before opening for that season, making another very interesting summer. They have spent much of their time and energy on updating existing cabins and making them more comfortable—replacing carpet, vinyl floors, showers, mattresses and furniture. The beach and kid amenities have also received a lot of attention. They have gradually turned the resort into a more "kid friendly" place with a much younger clientele.

They still cater to the fishing crowd, though, and take many guests on guide trips trying to put them on fish. The resort is ever changing and will continue to do so into the future. They have been members of the CMR from the start and have always been active in CMR activities, including serving on the Board twice. They have learned so much from other resorters through the CMR and consider the organization to be vital to the continuing success of the resort industry.

The Pitts realize that many challenges face this industry, which is why they have tried to stay involved in not only the CMR but also other resort related projects. This includes serving on the DNR Shoreland Rules Advisory Committee to revise the state's shoreland management standards, the DNR Fishing Roundtable, Leech Lake Tourism Bureau Board of Directors and the Leech Lake Fishing Task Force. They are excited to help plan the upcoming Governor's Fishing Opener on Leech Lake.

They feel that the "cabin at the lake" style resorts are still a popular destination for many families and will be in the future. However, guest expectations have also changed – shorter stays, more amenities, etc. Dana and Cindy claim, "Staying on top of the ever changing needs of guests will keep our resort a place people want to experience." Congratulations, Dana and Cindy!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2005: Steve and Bunny Fox of Sugar Point Resort , Federal Dam

ROY 2004: David and Lisa Moe, Clamshell Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes

ROY 2003: Dave and Bev Thompson, Fisherman's Village Resort, Battle Lake

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2005:**

### **Steve and Bunny Fox of Sugar Point Resort, Federal Dam, MN**

This year's recipients, like so many other couples, decided that resorting would be a great idea, while they were visiting the area where they now live. Anxious to look at resorts, they actually had trouble finding a realtor that would take them seriously and show them resorts. They finally did, and they found the resort of their dream and attempted to make an offer. The agent, however, wouldn't return their calls or respond in any way. So this couple took matters into their own hands, got the necessary forms from a stationary store in town, and in no time had put together their own purchase agreement. Soon they were proud resort owners, having already overcome local obstacles.

After they had bought, however, the realtor stopped by to visit them and offered to sell the resort for them, if they found it wasn't for them. They have successfully operated their resort for 25 years, and have yet to make that call. The early years proved to have excellent spring and fall business, and they enjoyed the activity.

After 5 years, they began upgrading bathrooms and kitchens, to make their cabins more appealing. They began to go after that summer business they were missing. The addition of a swimming pool greatly helped to fill out their lean weeks and they added family activities to appeal to the summer vacationers. Over the years, they have learned valuable lessons working with people, and have used these to their benefit: look for deals; be nice to people and learn from them; when you lose clientele in a bad economy, replace them from a solid market you can depend upon; and when a bunch of fishermen come up from Iowa bringing lots of beer, save all of their empties and take them back down to Iowa, to collect the 5 cent deposit.

This couple has been very active in the CMR and other tourism and local activities. They have been CMR members since the beginning, serving on the board, participating regularly in conferences, workshops and the legislative Day on the Hill. They never hesitate to participate in discussions or start one for that matter and they typically come early to CMR functions to help with the details and paperwork. Just don't try to bid against them on the silent auction items; it will usually cost you more money!

Our winners were instrumental in starting the Leech Lake Area Tourism Bureau and have served on its board. They have also been active on the Chamber Board, Cass County Tourism Board, Federal Dam Association, the Leech Lake Alliance and one served as a township supervisor. Steve and Bunny Fox of Sugar Point are definitely a "go to" couple for other resorters, always working for the betterment of their resort, the Leech Lake area, and tourism in general. For their 25 years of active service and successful business, I am proud to award this year's Resorters of the Year Award to Steve and Bunny Fox.

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2004: David and Lisa Moe, Clamshell Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes

ROY 2003: Dave and Bev Thompson, Fisherman's Village Resort, Battle Lake

ROY 2002: Dave and Mary Jane Keller, Brookside Resort, Park Rapids

## **Resorter of the Year 2004:**

### **David and Lisa Moe of Clamshell Beach Resort, Pequot Lakes, MN**

David and Lisa Moe owners of Clamshell Beach Resort, on the Whitefish Chain of Lakes in the Brainerd Lakes area were named the 2005 Resorters of the Year by the Congress of Minnesota Resorts. David and Lisa, along with their children Andrew, Grant and William have owned their resort for eight years and have made a number of improvements to their resort and contributed to the resort industry on many different levels.

David grew up on a resort in the Park Rapids area and clearly remembers telling his dad, "I can't wait till I grow up and don't have to do this anymore." He got a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Michigan Technological University and a Master's degree at Stanford University. He designed space communication satellites in California for seven years before marrying Lisa and returning to the Midwest where he designed supercomputers for Cray Research. Lisa worked in outside sales for General Electric in California and had various sales positions in the Midwest before becoming a full time mom.

When the entrepreneurial bug caught David and Lisa, they researched many business opportunities and decided that the resort business and being around people on vacation sounded great. "People on vacation are generally the happiest people in the world and they are great to be around!" remarks Lisa. "I decided that maybe my Mom and Dad were pretty smart after all," remembers David.

During their eight years at the resort, the Moe's have made a number of significant improvements to the resort. When they bought the resort there were twenty two units. Eleven of them were 1960s vintage mobile homes, and the other ten were cabins plus an owner's home. The ages of the cabins were 34-59 years old. Six of those ten cabins were located inside the Shoreland Impact Zone and their average size was just 608 square feet.

Today, all the mobile homes have been removed and the resort consists of 15 cabins, 6 of which have been built since 1999. "We actually have less bedrooms on the property today than when we bought the resort," said David. "We have been able to stay in business by gradually improving the resort. We are removing the cabins in the Shoreland Impact Zone and replacing them with new cottages that have amenities that the public has come to expect on their vacation," he adds. A new lodge with a snack bar and game room was added in 2004, and their new reunion cottages have been especially popular for families. "We have tried to create a vacation that we would like to take with our own family, and we are pretty tough critics," remarks Lisa.

David has served on the Minnesota office of Tourism Advisory Board representing the resort industry and he currently represents the resort industry on the Advisory Board for the University of Minnesota Tourism Center. They have served on the Congress of MN resorts board for the past three years, as well as the Whitefish Area Lodging Association, and the Pequot Lakes Chamber of Commerce. David has also testified in front of the state legislation representing the resort industry. This couple has taken a risk to create a unique and very progressive resort in the eight years they have owned it. They are great representatives of what resorters are now and will be in the future. Congratulations David and Lisa!

This year's committee consisted of:

ROY 2003: Dave and Bev Thompson, Fisherman's Village Resort, Battle Lake

ROY 2002: Dave and Mary Jane Keller, Brookside Resort, Park Rapids

ROY 2001: Ed and Joanne Fussy, Pimushe Resort, Bemidji

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2003:**

### **Dave and Bev Thompson of Fisherman's Village Resort, Battle Lake, MN**

Dave and Bev Thompson, owners of Fisherman's Village Resort located on Deer Lake north of Battle Lake, have been nominated by their peers as the CMR Resorters of the Year for 2003. Here is their story: Thirteen years ago, this young couple pulled up roots in Iowa to follow a boyhood dream, "To Own a Minnesota Fishing Resort". Well at least this was the dream of half of this partnership!

With a dream, a little cash in their pockets and lotsa spunk and ambition, an offer was made just to see how interested the sellers were in selling. Oops! The sellers accepted the offer, and as they described it, "They were the proud new owners of a "Real Fixer Upper!" The Thompsons immediately started remodeling their 8 cabins, taking nourishment on only beans and franks, borrowing money on 0 interest credit cards and taking jobs off the resort for many years to fund their dream.

They have created a True Minnesota experience on a piece of land 225' wide and 225' deep! With eight cabins, a tackle shop/resort store, their home and a storage building on 50,000 sq ft of land, the creativeness of this couple is amazing! Each cabin was remodeled on its original footprint, maximizing every square inch, complete with fireplaces, air conditioning and log furniture. They are charming in every way and all space is maximized for the comfort of their guests. Yes, this remodeling project was to only provide a clean cabin with a good bed and table for the fisherman.

The young lady in this partnership made sure the cabins were comfortable for young couples and families as well by adding nice furnishings, matching comforters, matching dishes and charming decorations, much to the dismay of the boy with the dream.

Over the next few years using creative marketing, the area's first website and even aggressive pricing, the people started coming. This brought a need for all new boats, motors and pontoon. And with these came vacation packages, complete with cabins, boats, motors, depth finders or the pontoon for the stay.

This resorter is a tireless advocate for tourism, fighting the establishments that strangle our industry, a rebel without a cause! The following is a list of what they have done to help us all.

- Commissioner on the Otter Tail County Water District Board.
- Served 2-years on the DNR Fisheries Bag Limit Review Board.
- The only resorter serving on the DNR Citizen Oversight Committee of Game and Fish Fund-Fisheries and the DNR Special Task Force for Trails and Waterways reorganization.
- On the special task force as the CMR Representative for Fire Marshall Funding- Being the co-author of the legislative report for the task force.
- MRCA Member for 13 years.
- Member of the Ottertail County Tourism and Fergus Falls CVB.
- CMR Member for 12 years and CMR Board member for 2 years.
- An outspoken advocate of selective harvest locally and statewide successfully encouraged local fishing guides to reduce their daily catch and kill limits on guide trips from the state limit of 6 walleyes to 4.
- Continually monitoring the Minnesota Legislature.
- Reporting by e-groups, phone, and letters to resorters on legislation that may positively or negatively affect tourism.
- He has made the CMR Legislative Committee the most recognized and influential lobby for resorts in Minnesota.
- Organizes the CMR Day on the Hill- which brought nearly 30 resorters to St. Paul last February to discuss and present our issues.
- Was the Key individual in landmark legislation that exempted resorts from the loss of DNR Electronic Licensing Systems and from Fire Marshall Fees.
- He spends hours weekly talking to resorters on local and state issues which are adversely affecting resorts and their ability to remain viable and directs them to laws and ordinances to help them fight this local control.

These are true ambassadors of vacations with a cause. They bought a motor home in Utah over e-bay so a vacation is needed to bring it home. A vacation truly needed! And then there is the fishing and hunting in the off-season to keep peace at home. It is well deserved! Congratulations Dave and Bev, you are an inspiration to us all!!!

## **Resorter of the Year Award 2002:**

### **Dave and Mary Jane Keller of Brookside Resort, Park Rapids, MN**

The recipients of the CMR Resorters of the Year award for 2002 are Dave & Mary Jane Keller, owners of Brookside Resort which is located on the east side of Two Inlets Lake north of Park Rapids. With 25 years of operation behind them they continue to look to the future with enthusiasm. Just like their website says "they still enjoy the excitement of greeting new guests and renewing old friendships."

This large busy resort of 28 cabins, 9-hole 3-par golf course, mini- golf, tennis, large lodge & pool, planned activities and supervised childcare and even "Captain Bingo" - demands lots of employees. They have been recognized by many over the years. In 1994 they were honored by Midwest Living Magazine as being listed as one of the 50 top midwest resorts. Family Circle chose this resort as one of the 5 best cabin resorts in the nation and there were also included in Jordon Cohen's book "Great Vacations With Your Kids".

Through the 25 years they have continued to improve their facilities by remodeling and/or removing cabins that don't meet their standards. In 2002 a new 2-bedroom cabin was built. This continues into the 2003 season with them looking at plans on how to remodel their 13 A-frame cabins to provide more light and space.

Being progressive not only in facilities and planned activities, they too have continued to increase rates to assure they receive the return on their investment that they deserve. Mentoring to others is what the CMR is all about and these resorters are no exception. From hosting resort tours, to planning CMR fall conventions, being involved with their local chamber, being on the school board for 10 years, being involved with Heartland Homes, numerous church committees and activities and even Past President of the CMR – this couple is always willing to share knowledge, experiences and talents with others – resorters and others.

## **Resorter of the Year Awaris 2001:**

### **Ed and Joanne Fussy of Pimushe Resort, Bemidji, MN**

Congratulations to Ed and Joanne Fussy, recipients of the 2001 Congress of Minnesota Resorts Annual Resorter of the Year Award. Ed and Joanne are the owners of Pimushe Resort. Pimushe is located on the southern shore of Pimushe Lake northwest of Bemidji, MN in the heart of Chippewa National Forest. Pimushe has 9 cabins spaced for privacy and each with a beautiful view of 7 mile long Pimushe Lake.

Seven years ago Ed decided that his construction and implement business no longer offered what he was looking for in a lifelong career. Joanne, a respiratory therapist and native of Bemidji, thought a change sounded good as well. The young couple set out from their home in Royalton to search for the perfect resort. After dealing with the many headaches that employees present in a business, Ed and Joanne searched for an operation they could handle on their own. In October of 1994, they found what they were looking for in Pimushe Resort derived from the Indian word meaning "sail with the wind."

In December of 1998 they made resorting a family affair with the birth of their daughter Kendall. Kendall is a delightful child and enjoys fishing off the dock, playing on the swing set and welcoming all of the kids to the resort in her warm outgoing way. Joanne still dabbles in respiratory therapy now and again while running the resort and being a mother of a three year old. Ed still gets his fill of construction as he tackles a major project annually.

The Fussy's progressive attitude can be seen throughout Pimushe, starting with the new 3 and 4 bedroom units they built last winter, each made extra special with their own hand crafted furnishings, homemade quilts and decor, not to mention the quality and craftsmanship in the buildings themselves. Ed not only does his own building but even logs, saws and mills the wood for virtually everything he builds. From his wood floors distressed with a logging chain to hand made rockers and stump tables it all adds to a warm unique Northwoods retreat.

The building and remodeling is a team effort as Joanne, not to be outdone, cranked out 23 quilts last winter for the new units as well as adding her decorative touch. Ed and Joanne are also progressing in promoting a higher rate structure for their area as well as themselves. Since 1995 they have succeeded in doubling their cabin rates and tripling their extra person charges as well as increasing their deposit amount to half of the cabin rental.

Their website shows, without a doubt, they have entered the technological marketing era with a very impressive website, complete with online brochures and QuickTime movies. Check it out at [www.mnresortvacation.com](http://www.mnresortvacation.com). The webmaster is Gordon Moe of [gordonmoe.com](http://gordonmoe.com). Taking advantage of marketing to early season fishermen and carrying through the shoulder seasons with guided bear hunts allow the Fussy's to get the maximum out of their investment.

Mentoring to others is what the CMR is all about and our 2001 recipients are no exception. From holding furniture classes to visiting new resort owners in the area this is a couple who is willing to share their knowledge about resorting. Their experience both before owning a resort and after has been valuable in helping out others in many situations. Part of what makes them such a valuable resource is the fact that they are always looking for better ways to do things and are not afraid to try them. A prime example is the network of floating docks at the resort. All home made by the owners, you can see the evolution process that has taken place, and the thought and resourcefulness which has resulted in a fabulous dock system, with all of the benefits of a floating dock and none of the drawbacks. These examples permeate the resort from the decoys at the end of the dock to the catch and release sign and the plastic bag fly deterrent. These ideas abound at Pimushe.

A model resorter is often involved in activities outside the CMR with benefit and impact our industry. Fussy's have represented the CMR and tourism industry as a whole in many ways, including being board members of the CMR, Bemidji Chamber, Bemidji Resort Association, MN Northwoods Tourism and the Northwoods Lakes Area Partnership. Perhaps the most important contribution has been their tireless service in the area of fisheries management and conservation. Through town meetings, round tables and citizen advisory committees, Ed has kept the CMR and tourism industry linked to the DNR and its decision making process.

They have also served the tourism industry in their own community by chairing many different marketing groups in the area, always striving to pull everyone together and pool marketing groups in the area, and their hard work is paying off. Within the CMR Ed and Joanne have held board positions and planned conventions among many other duties. Since receiving the reward in October Ed and Joanne have been getting plenty of ink from local papers. Here is what they are saying: The Bemidji Pioneer writes "Attention to detail, homelike touches, a relaxed atmosphere linked with aggressive marketing and community service earned Ed and Joanne Fussy, owners of Pimushe Resort, the Congress of Minnesota



Resorts title of Resorters of the Year." The Cass Lakes Times says "Involvement in the resort community, a creative and progressive approach to running their resort and attention to detail were factors that landed the Fussys' the Resorter of the Year Award." Public Television's Lakeland News will also be doing a story on Pimushe.

Congratulates Ed and Joanne, you are mentors in our industry and great ambassadors of the CMR.