

Planning for Group Sales Growth

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By Paul Beachnau



This year is continuing to witness unprecedented growth for the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau with the recent addition of a Group Sales Manager to our team. We are excited to welcome Alise Hale, who joined us in April to fill this position.

The process of delving into group sales began a few years ago during our updated strategic planning process. Our forward-thinking Board of Directors included the strategy of becoming more aggressive with recruiting group travel to Gaylord. A record budget, with a 14 percent increase in room sales in 2023, allowed us to include this position in our 2024 budget.

Some of the challenges of the travel industry in Gaylord are the fluctuations in business that we see throughout the year. We experience huge upward ticks in business during the summer and winter months due to our amazing outdoor recreation opportunities, followed by a slowdown in

travelers during mud season/early spring and pre-winter/late fall. Even during the busy months, we see dips in business during the week.

One strategy to combat these swings is to focus on attracting meetings and conferences, sports travel and weddings. We need an extra set of hands not only to handle requests for meeting spaces, but also to actively pursue these groups, attend functions and develop relationships with the decision-makers who schedule these events.

Gaylord is well-positioned to handle group events. First and foremost, our location in the lower peninsula along I-75 and M-32 makes us an easily accessible destination for groups from throughout the state. Groups with participants from the Upper Peninsula find Gaylord more convenient than traveling further downstate. Secondly, we have seen new growth in our meeting and lodging facilities, wedding venues and sports venues in the past five years. This combination puts us in a strong position to grow this segment of the travel industry in Gaylord. Our new staff member, Alise, is off to a great start. With her on board, we are confident in our success.

We are excited about the future and look forward to the growth and opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you for your continued support as we work to make Gaylord an even more vibrant and dynamic destination.